
ノーゲーム・ノーライフ
NO GAME NO LIFE
6
ゲーマー夫婦は世界に挑んだそうです
著／イラスト●榎宮祐
MF文庫
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「……な、なぁなぁ、死んでやがるのか、です？」
――唯一神（ゆいいっしん）は行き倒れていた。

「……ずっと、ずっとずっと――傍にいさせて、くだ、さい……」

「理屈なんか無視して
――同じ道を歩いてくれないか。
俺の妻として、さ……」

――そんな権能がいつ造られたのか。
知を流れた一筋の涙に、シュヴィは救い出すように答える。


敵・天翼種ジブリール。
勝率、絶無。
だが……確率論に――『0』は、ない。
「……全武装、典開……全力で命乞い、開始する」
「おや？　機凱種は撃破要因を模倣する種、どなたか笑い殺されたので？」

Prologue

Part 1

—— In my childhood, I had thought that the world was a very simple existence.

Every competition could be won by some means, and just putting in effort would reap its own rewards. Everything was possible.

This was the ignorant and stupid thinking of a child.

Looking at the world with such pure and innocent eyes… is this wrong?

…… *Of course it is wrong……*

…….————

In a narrow room illuminated by a dim light, a boy was holding a chess piece.

Only that boy was in the room.

But the boy was looking towards the depths of the darkness, seriously thinking if there was some person there.

——– *What a game… From my final analysis, this is just some prank that some kids pulled here.*

The boy was alone in the room. While imagining the strongest absolute move, he placed the piece on the chessboard.

His way of thinking was as fixed as that of an infant who had just became sentient.

The outside of the room was filled with horror and anxiety… Desperation was generated from the uncertainty of tomorrow, which also made the nights even colder.

Only inside the room was it like a different world. Contrary to the norm, the gloomy room had a strange temperature.

The boy was holding onto the piece while deep in thought.

—— Once anyone becomes an adult, he will naturally alienate himself from games.

Why is that so? Did they become obsolete?

Or is it that the world is so simple that it'll never have games?

Whatever the reason, once anyone becomes an adult, he will naturally alienate himself from games.

But the boy never considered such a thing before.

He put the pieces back on the board again only after careful consideration.

—— Alone by himself, he was a kid who was endlessly playing games.

Even if the people around him were to stare at him with strange eyes as he grew up, the boy continued to play.

This was because the boy did not understand the meaning behind those strange eyes.

And also because [his opponent] would appear in the dark as long as he closed his eyes.

[He] was almost the same age as the boy, and wore similar clothes… a fearless smile floated on his face.

—— '[He] is very strong' was what the boy thought.

[He] was always better than the boy in the next move, and then the outcome would always be determined —— as a definite loss.

The boy had expected this as a matter of course. It looked as if he had never won a single time from the start.

This —— battling against [him] —— made the boy incomparably happy.

The people in his surroundings would see that the boy was always by himself, but in the boy's eyes, there were actually two people, and nothing more.

In the dark depths, he was wordless and silent.

He was only craving to make his next move superior to his last.

—— *A more correct move… More excellent tactics! More in-depth strategies!!*

[He] was happily shouting while he faced the boy in the depths of darkness. The boy cast a likewise fearless smile.

…… The boy felt there was nothing wrong, even if he was alone in the eyes of other people.

The world was pure and simple. If you don't win, you lose. Otherwise, it's a tie and nothing more.

Then, regardless of the outcome —— even if it was always a loss —— the boy would be thinking of how to achieve his next victory.

This was [the boy's world].

But the [world] was mercilessly ravaging his [individual world].

… Suddenly, the dark room was lit by a bright light. The boy looked to the window.

It should have been a scarlet sight, but the dark night sky was now sealed off by bright lights.

The boy shouted towards his parents, who had just rushed into the room, and pulled him into their embrace. In his complete and utter confusion, he saw [that].

It was like heaven and earth was being connected by that pillar of light.

Looking to a blue face, while his parents were holding him and shouting to ask what was going on, the boy reached out his hand all of a sudden.

—— A winner has yet to be announced.

—— The boy hugged the board he used to battle in that instant… and then…

When he looked up again, something which looked exactly like a burning retina was about to collide head-on against him.

————……

—— I see, the world never indeed had a game so simple.

The boy woke up upon smelling an extremely terrible odor. Then, the boy finally understood the truth.

The boy's arm was scorched. Unable to climb out of his mother's hold, he looked around his surroundings…

His five senses were unreasonably violated within the scene of [his own world] …

His mouth was full of fresh blood. His nose detected the smell of charred flesh. His ears heard a silent abyss. His skin was feeling a searing heat.

Then, his eyes saw that the world had changed dramatically.

He could not even find traces of the existence of life.

Rubble extended to the endless horizons, and dust floated over the upturned ground. The boy then looked up at the sky.

The crimson sky looked as if it were about to fall. Its 'destroyed' state made flights intertwine.

It looked to be a selfish war between gods who did not place others in their eyes.

This could not be counted as just a 'falling out'.

Not only was the little world within the boy's house wiped out without a trace, so was everyone else's worlds.

… So this is what's happening. Indeed, there is no simpler game in the world.

Because there were no rules to follow… Because there was no jurisdiction, there was nothing that sanctioned violators of others' rights.

But, up to this point——

Suddenly, standing in front of the boy through a tear of smoke was a figure that

had landed at the top of the rubble.

The figure did not care for the boy… inadvertently.

The figure had truly and only inadvertently noticed the other's gaze.

—— The boy stared at the destroyers who took away his everything, and thought,

Yeah, humanity isn't even considered as 'players' in [their] eyes.

His own… Humanity's world was just so easily destroyed into nothing but dust.

Though it was through the explosions of flames and dust… Though the figure could barely be recognized under such circumstances… "……————"

After confirming that their eyes had met, the boy turned his back on her, and took his first step.

Ignoring the feeling that his back was being watched, he advanced far away—— far away to an eternally distant location, in order to live on.

The boy was gripping his board with so much force that it might have snapped.

On that day, the boy became an [adult].

This world was chaotic, and there were no necessities in it. But, it was full of opportunities.

There is no reason, and no plan, so it must be meaningless.

To create a room, that does not exist anywhere else, for a child to play around in ——

Part 2

The long-lasting "war" tore the sky and earth asunder and obliterated the stars.

Arisen from the battle was the [position of the Sole God] —— the absolute right to dominate over the world. It was over six thousand years ago…

In this world, the god who won without fighting —— Tet, had set [Ten Oaths].

Violence is forbidden, all conflicts are to be determined by games —— in Disboard, a board atop the world.

In a city on the Ruushia continent, a continent in such a world,

Elchea, capital of the Elchea "Provisional Federation",

Just a few months ago, the city was in desperation, with the claws of ruin hounding at it.

This was the last city for Imanity, the sixteenth ranked of the Exceed races.

But the situation suddenly changed.

The "Eastern Union", the Werebeasts' country with countless islands,

"Oceando", the undersea country inhabited by the Sirens and the Dhampirs,

And "Avant Heim", the sky nation in which the Flugels resided,

After the enthronement of new "Kings", Elchea suddenly became the capital of a country which had merged three countries and four races.

Now the Central Avenue of the capital was full of vivacity and vibrant power.

Merchants and farmers regained their lost resources and obtained a huge amount of new assets, and craftsmen now had high demand for their work.

Everyone used their own feet or carriage to run across the land like a race, and the sound of commerce just kept going on and on.

—— In this world where all conflicts were resolved by games,

It was simple, no matter how you put it.

But with the extreme and rapid speed of the reformation, other races and countries were being merged forcibly by games.

No matter how you worded it, it was hard to be remembered by the people as anything other than a [policy of aggression].

To announce that they were to establish a government and merge different cultures through a republic system —— was not something particularly easy.

Initially, it would cause the political situation to fall into utter chaos, with unfathomable struggles between the different countries and races.

Originally, these were sure to have all happened.

If not for the [Kings] — Sora and Shiro.

They had won in the international games — with their [country's land as a bid], and on top of that, they had declared that it would be [a total and completely bloodless invasion where no one would be at a disadvantage].

On streets with numerous people passing though, even werebeasts could be easily spotted.

This was the fruit of the ridiculous, mad idea of establishing an inter-racial federation across the great wall of different Exceed races.

Though it was very slow, their plan was progressing surely, and this was its proof.

The world was undergoing a revolution —— right here, with Elchea as the center.

To that exact presentiment, some probably felt anxious about it.

But, at the same time -- people would have had excitement flaring in their heart and shining eyes.

[The revolution of the world] —— they were witnessing it.

.....Then, let's bring the topic slightly back on track.

As mentioned before, the Sole God had constructed the [Ten Oaths] which enforced that every conflict must be resolved by games.

But as for the Sole God, Tet… what was he usually up to… was it something interesting?

The private life of the god with close to absolute power and knowledge about everything… this is a special time which all will be told.

Now, he was probably lying in an alley in Elchea, being poked by a young werebeast girl by twig.

"...Na, naa naa, have you died, des?"

--the Sole God had starved on the streets.

"……So, so it is like this…… Imanity .....in the case which nothing is eaten, death is the result....."

"Werebeasts would also die like that, des. Are you stupid, des?"

Being chastised directly by her with rolling eyes, Tet's face was pressed onto the ground.

The black-haired werebeast girl with fennec-like ears was Hatsuse Izuna.

Originally the ambassador of the Eastern Union residing in Elchea, she was currently a game-mate of Elchea's two kings -- no, one of their close servants.

While poked by Izuna, Tet thought about that.

Although it was the first time he tried to "become an Imanity", it seemed like his plan had crashed and burned.

So, what was the Sole God planning to do here?

Actually it was just – to waste time, because the Sole God was already "bored to the brink of death" by now.

Even with the title of the Sole God, looking at the entire world from far, far away, was very boring.

Not to mention he was the "Original God of Games". It was obvious that he would've wanted to play games.

Thus, to prevent his existence from being realized, he disguised himself as the race of his destination, and limited his own power.

Moderately walking across the world and then returning to his home once he experienced enough —— was the daily life for the Sole God, Tet.

He followed this regime, and this time he suddenly came up with the idea to appear before Sora and Shiro.

"I'm here, hehe♪"

---He wanted to do this, but it seemed like he'd have to [leave] before reaching his destination.

Having become an Imanity, and after impulsively walking for a few days without food or sleep, he then thought...

Imanity is weak beyond imagination.

Tet was immensely touched. The Sole God was very angry---no, very hungry---,

"..... Take this and eat, des."

Saying this, Izuna handed a fish she had just bought to Tet.

Tet looked at Izuna with eyes as if he were before a goddess, and asked,

"...C, can I?"

"...Have it quickly, des. Or I’m going to change my mind, des."

Deliberately moving her eyes away from the fish, Izuna was slavering while she spoke, but she held herself back.

"...As I was going to travel to a faraway place, I was asked to buy something to eat, des."

Tet saw the giant leather bag on the back of the whispering Izuna.

"...that, is that for everyone?"

"...? It's Izuna's own portion, everyone goes to buy their own portion, des."

So the werebeasts needed to match the amount of calories that their physical abilities burned.

"Can only share you a little, des. Because only so many snacks can be bought with *300 dollars*, so I didn't buy much, des."

--As seen by Tet, there were already not a lot of goods that worth *300 gold coins*, but he didn't speak his thought.

It was already worthy of many thanks to receive a gift of food from a goddess, but----

"But I don't have much that can be given to express my thanks....ah, right—let’s play a couple games?"

To the proposal suggested by Tet, who was biting a raw fish, Izuna's ears twitched with a ‘piu~’.

Let’s play some games? —— When facing Tet who just said this, her werebeasts' sixth sense was activated.

"...You are, very strong, des?"

"Nhuhu, although it's just a proclamation, I've only lost once since my birth♪."

"Winning and losing, winning and losing, des."

————……

"Why--Why can’t I win desu?!"

—One hour of non-stop card games —Izuna had [9 losses 0 wins].

"Ahaha~♪ If you can't win against those two people, then the chance that you’d beat me would be impossible□ "

"——Those two people. Sora and Shiro, you know them, des?"

...good observation. Tet precipitously laughed in his heart.

Looking towards the 'young saint’ before him, unexpectedly——

"...How about it? Let's chat while playing games."

"...You are going to distract Izuna's attention by talking, des. Sora always does that, des."

"Ahaha, it doesn't matter. Even if I don’t do this —— the one who would win would still be me, of course □ "

"...Beat you, absolutely have to beat you, des."

That being said, she looked at him as if she was looking through his cards.

"You can say anything you want, des. Izuna will definitely win, des."

Hearing Izuna proclaim that, Tet turned his sight to the far end, and a smile appeared on his face.

"I think this is a story that is very difficult to follow… Something that you had never heard before?"

"..... Can’t hear you, des."

Hasn't this already been told before? ——Tet attempted to hide his wry smile while he spoke. "That's fine, too. As for the reason why it hasn't been heard--these are some tales which have never been told from the beginning of time.

Indeed, Izuna’s appearance overlapped with a certain part of his memory.

The Sole God started his narration--- long, long ago,

“……It was too boring, too boring…… it was something like a great war back then…”

Chapter 1 - 3-1=Hopeless

Part 1

——long long ago, something called the [Sun] existed.

Exuding out radiant white flames, coloring the sky with translucent blue——yes, this was how it spread.

The [Great war] between gods and creatures scorched the earth. The whole sky became clouded with ash.

The ash-filled sky and the overflowing Astronomical Force——Elemental gallery, came into conflict, causing light to emit which resulted in the sky turning red.

This redness enveloped the continuous mutual-killing on the lands.

Or perhaps, the star itself was lamenting, spilling out fresh blood...

In the blood-stained sky, only aquamarine-colored ash continues to fall down.

————.....

Ivan gazed at the red sky and frowned.

The [black ash] that let out aquamarine light fell onto the ground, starting to pile up.

Ivan dazed when thinking about the limits a human could possess in regards to knowledge.

Humans were unable to sense elemental particles, so they shouldn't be able to see the aquamarine light. As for why the sky was dyed red, it was probably due to the polarizing light or some other unknown reasons. Elemental particles were originally blue to begin with....

As for how the humans are able to perceive and link to the Elemental Gallery.....It probably has something to do with the last light emitted from the dying Elemental after the conflict with the ash.

——[Elemental bones]. To majority of the living species including humans, this was a lethal poison.

Touching it burns the skin. Entering the eye causes blindness. If consumed, the innards would be dissolved.

Even though it shone an aquamarine light, it was called [Black ash] because the nature of it symbolizes death itself.

Perhaps, this stuff may actually be merciful....

The dust mask covered his head. The fur armor was built to withstand the cold. If one took all these off and casually lie on the ground——the ground filled with [Black ash (Death)], it would bring that someone into a blissful sleep.

(Really want to rest. Working non-stop since this morning. My body is numbed, I want to drink a bowl of hot soup, wash away all these ash and snuggle in my wife's chest and sleep——if I can't even achieve all of these some day, then right now I should just.....)

That kind of temptation forced Ivan to tremble, completely stopping his thoughts.

Born in this kind of world, there was no reason for survival or death——

"——Ivan. Did the black ash enter your brain?"

Ivan turned back after hearing his companion's murmur. After blinking a few times, he saw his two partners beside him.

"....It was only a little break, Allei. I am already getting on my years eh?"

"If you are getting old, then shouldn't we be the same?" Allei bitterly said.

Against the young boy who was one year younger than he was, Ivan retorted ironically.

"Are you awake yet? Maybe someday we can't fool around like this anymore oh —— Riku, you too."

Saying so, Ivan looked towards Riku—— the "leader" in front of him.

The youngest among the three, with a teenage face hidden underneath the

mask and windshield.

His face couldn't be seen. Looking through the wind glass....were a pair of pupils that looked like the abyss itself.

"Thank you for the advice. Then——after a short [break]....We'll continue."

——dressed like a rock, together with leather clothing that crept upwards from the legs.

His limbs were numbed, he didn't even eat——this was for the sake of not be discovered by the [Enemy]. In order to live.

And——in order to come here.

Ivan lowered his head, overlooking the hills in silence.

As expected, there was a huge pit....A steel mountain laid in the center.

Part 2

This was built by the dwarves, a warship meant for air combat. However, it was currently wrecked.

There were traces of earth-shattering [Skirmishes] in this area a few weeks ago.

Riku's objective today was to scavenge for any usable resource.

Cracks present in the armor allowed the team to enter the ship. Ivan asked Riku.

"....The elemental needle plate?"

"No. The [Black ash] is too intense. The elemental particles would affect it."

Ivan silently protested. This way, they had one less insurance for their lives.

Elemental needle plate——a pyroxene that reacts strongly to elemental particles. An artifact created by connecting obsidian.

It was used to sense gods and their dependents——ultimately informing the direction of those [Monsters] with extremely high Elemental particles count——although it was created by Riku and his sister, for now it couldn't be used.

Thus, they could only discern the enemy's position using their five senses.

The trash known as the human species who were exiled and sent away, against monsters with super senses——too hilarious.

Indeed, too hilarious.

"....Move forward with caution." Riku muttered with a straight face.

Ivan and another companion——Allei silently nodded before sneaking into the wreckage.

To enter the place just by bending their backs and brushing past the accumulated dust, was definitely luck——

....Focus!

Ivan then said to himself.

(Don't be disarrayed, be as insignificant as a speck of dust. Kill the sound of breathing and the heartbeat. Tense up the five senses, ensure that not even dust can escape my sights)

——compared to previous times, this didn't even count as being dangerous.

They were a considerate distance away from the battlefield. The place they were currently in could be said to be a mountain of abandoned garbage.

However, calling this place [Safe] would be complacency. There was a chance that a lost monster was still lurking around.

Maybe, there might even be other races that had no relation to the war wandering around.

Or perhaps, there were remnants of the dwarves who piloted this ship——

Even if the other party was in a near-death state, they wouldn't survive a confrontation.

——this was their reality. A shocking, unreasonable reality.

If a dwarf held an item, it meant one thing——hundreds of human lives would get reduced to ash.

This was the impact of being their enemy. In order to survive to the future, hide from the present.

So——

"——hey, Ivan, this is a huge find!!"

Hearing the loud cry from behind him, Ivan turned around with a vexed expression.

Some distance away was Allei, who had a look of excitement. Allei's eyes were sparkling as he waved his right hand dramatically.

"Come here, this thing is awesome!"

Ivan squinted his eyes to look at Allei as well as Riku's face.

"....."

Riku remained silent as he slowly lifted a hand——creating an action as if slitting the throat.

Just like that, Allei who couldn't control his excitement and panted restlessly a while ago started to tremble slightly.

"So....Sorry. But, but, take a look at this."

The object Allei found seemed like a small box at first glance.

It was connected with several pieces of complicated items.

But when Allei twisted the object with his hand, the box released a rainbow-colored light.

"This is——!"

Looking at the large-scale map projected in the air, even Ivan couldn't conceal his shock and let out a surprised breath.

"Could this be——the world map?!"

"Yes, the latest edition too!"

——world map. Although they've collected data as well as made their own measurements, ultimately the map created was only of a certain degree. However, the map projected in the air displayed the world's continents and oceans accurately without lacking a single detail. Furthermore, during the war, the terrain may change at any time, this was indeed——

"....It's not just that."

Riku murmured softly.

"A strategic map, and also the enemy forces——there are secret codes, but decoding it should be easy with the dwarves' language. No problems."

"——Ha, haha!"

It was understandable why Allei was this excited——even Ivan let out a smile.

In other words, with this map——inferring the situation of the battle was possible.

Infer what happens in the future and choose a safer place to live...!

What a perfect find, Riku calmly said.

"Ivan, Allei, compare and amend the map we currently have with the left and right side of the map respectively. I'll transcribe the strategic and enemy forces map."

""Swear to the commands!""

Ivan and Allei couldn't hide their excitement as they accepted the command.

Swear upon the deceased, swear upon the pact——acceptance.

Taking out the paper, ink and measurement items out of their packs, they started working.

Their time was tight, but they had to accurately plot the data and copy down.

However, Allei suddenly thought of something and opened his mouth.

"Ne, Riku, can't we just take the projection device back?"

Riku slowly raised his head while Allei continued.

"Isn't it better like this? It wouldn't be a burden regardless of size, and we don't have to waste paper and time——"

"Dismissed. We can't take anything that uses Elemental particles to function. Write quickly."

"I'm saying that, but, the size of this..."

"Allei."

With a sharp tone, Riku called out Allei's name.

"....If you want to die, then say it out——I'll grant your desire."

Riku said with a dark and murderous intent-filled voice, his face expressionless and his pupils lightless.

"Killing you alone could prevent a monster from detecting the elemental particles and destroying us all. It is simply too cheap a price to pay."

"——I, I understand——...Sorry..."

Fearing the menacing Riku, Allei shook his head.

"Bu, but, you don't have to be so angry right....?"

"Allei, what Riku said——is our aim. Have you forgotten it?"

Ivan gave advice, but the look on his face was serious, causing Allei to swallow a mouthful of his saliva.

"——[We don't exist, we cannot exist, so we cannot be perceived]...."

"See, don't you remember it? To die because of the refusal to copy down a map ——is there anything more boring than this death?"

"....Sorry."

Allei whispered an apology.

At this time, a slow and heavy vibration came from the ground.

"....!"

Instantaneously, the three of them lowered their body and went into the shade, as if previously discussed.

——using his best efforts to calm the violent beating of his heart.

Holding his breath together with his trembling body, Ivan looked at Riku who was also concealed.

Riku took a small knife from his glove and unhesitatingly cut the tip of his index finger.

(....Nothing has changed....)

Pressing his exposed nerve onto the ground, intelligence was retrieved through the fingertips, then it was transmitted to the other senses, mainly his ears.

Using eyes to check was too risky. It was akin to suicidal behavior at this time.

However, placing the ears onto the ground could do it. The sounds from outside could be heard.

Using these means that far exceeded rationality, Riku had finished analyzing the [Enemy] that inadvertently revealed itself.

This level of vibration and rhythm of the sound led to some conclusions.

Ivan licked his lips in his gas mask, closely watching Riku's gestures.

——.....About 180 feet away, two-legged race, one, heavy and slow——probably meant as a trick.

From Riku's gestures, the [Enemy]'s height was approximately——[Twenty feet].

Larger than humans by three times, no wonder it was slow——in short, it should be searching for something....?

Ivan's back was full of sweat.

Then, from their ears came the sound of roars, shaking the entire surroundings.

(Damn, it's a Demonia!!)

They were convinced even without Riku's gestures.

A mutant Phantasma—— demons created by the [Demon king].

Basically, they are mentally retarded monsters. Saying that they were beasts not given enough brains was not too far away from the truth either.

Despite its huge strength, it was aware of them [Preys]——it was because they were incomplete beings that they lost the instinct of quietly approaching their prey. Now, was the thing wandering nearby a Demonia or simply one of the variants of the more inferior races. It was estimated to be a man-eater and a hill spirit—— in that case, a battle with our current strength?

——impossible. This was clear.

Yes——completely impossible.

Even if their opponents were the inferior Demonias——humans were still piles of meat when facing against them.

Those guys didn't lurk around like beasts or gave warnings, because there wasn't a need to.

They are strong, they always solved all problems with their own strength. This has always been their tender and rational way of living.

The weapons on their hands.....no, even if they developed a meticulous plan, no humans could kill a Demonia.

All these actions were pointless.

Even if they used up all their wisdom, strategies and traps to launch attacks against the Demonia——what was the point?

This would only get perceived by [Superior] Demonias with higher wisdom and they would understand the [Threat] of humans right?

The extinction of humans would be met with no resistance.

So they only had one course of action at this state.

There were no other choices.

.....[We do not exist, we cannot exist, so we cannot be perceived]....

Human resistance was not permitted, or else they would be the hunted [Prey].

In that case——Ivan guessed the outcome.

Slowly turning his head, he looked at Riku——who said the next words.

"Ivan, I command you."

Riku announced just like that.

"——die here."

"Swear to the commands. Leave it to me."

Smiling wryly——Ivan didn't hesitate to answer.

Entrusting his pack to Allei, Ivan started walking forward.

"Oi, oi...."

Facing against Allei who was holding the pack with trembling hands, Ivan advised while smiling.

"You understand right, Allei. In here, someone has to be sacrificed."

Yes——someone has to be bait, while the remaining two look for opportunities to escape. There was no other way.

180 feet——would take about 8 seconds for a human to run.

Against the Demonia who was closing the distance——there was no other choice.

If the three of them fled, it would still result in demise. The worst case was to get chased towards the colony——even though the enemy's knowledge was low, this kind of thing was still capable of being done.

Riku must have considered [Who] and [Where] would the sacrifice take place....

"Riku is important, and as for Allei, you are still young. It was natural who would

be the bait right?"

"But——because of this...!"

Ivan smiled.

He then unbuckled the lock on his chin and slowly took off his dust mask.

"Ivan....!?"

The cold air blowing on his skin incredibly relieved his tension.

The wind evaporated the sweat on his body and blew the stench of the beast's skin away, bringing an extremely comfortable feeling.

"Don't mind me. [In order to protect my friends and family]——this reason of death would be very noble right?"

Saying this, Ivan handed his mask over the still trembling Allei.

"..Damn it. Dammmnnnnnn——ITTT!"

Patting on the shoulders of his long time friend, Ivan turned away.

Ivan turned towards Riku——looking through the windshield into his black pupil, he said so.

"Goodbye, Riku. I'll leave my family——my kids, in your care."

Riku was still nonchalant.

Watching Ivan who was gazing at him, he nodded.

"Ahh, leave it to me."

.....

"I'm sorry too."

Hearing Ivan's words, Riku replied back in surprise.

"...Why do you apologize?"

"I'm sorry too."

"Oi, Ivan. You...."

Allei's trembling voice was heard behind Ivan's back.

As if to hide his true feelings, Ivan was back-facing Riku. Then, he waved his hand.

"Allei, together with my part, take care of Riku. .....Then, I'll go on ahead(Death) oh."

Part 4

At the same time, Riku, Allei and Ivan——flew out of the shadows, but in contrasting directions.

Contrary to Riku and Allei's actions of trotting while bending to the ground, Ivan ran full speed ahead while shouting out.

Hearing the beast's roar, Ivan maintained his speed while giving a slight glance to his back.

After it noticed the enemy, it kicked the steel wreckage apart and started moving over to Ivan's direction.

——the [Enemy] was huge. Just like what Riku had speculated, it was at least three times bigger than a human.

Even though it was cloaked in black skin, the bulging muscles could be seen. Jagged teeth that nearly covered half of its face was exposed the moment it opened its mouth.

Ivan laughed upon thinking that he would get to experience the monster's attack first-hand.

Facing the monster, heading in a completely different direction from Ivan, Ivan could see the escaping Riku and Allei.

Attracted by the great movements as well as the loud shouting, the monster didn't notice Riku and Allei——

"————ha, ha!"

Ivan had to cry out loudly to attract the monster's attention. He then focused his attention on the escape route and picked up speed.

The decoy mission was proceeding smoothly. The next step was to distract the monster a little bit longer.

No matter what, the best outcome is the best right? After all....This is a human's last job.

——yes, his mission was over from here onwards.

Only a single run left before the end of his life——it was really a simple task.

"I'm sorry Riku——to leave you with such troublesome tasks."

From now on, there would be more difficult, more precarious and more tedious jobs awaiting the person who was like his little brother(Riku).

In the next few minutes, or maybe a few seconds later, he wouldn't feel as relaxed as this——

"Ahhh, although this may be too much....But, could you please——damn it."

——Riku's pair of abyss-like dark eyes emerged in Ivan's mind.

Even when staring at Ivan, there was——nothing shone out of it.

No fear, no hesitation, not shaken, no sorrow, no pain. Nothing emerged.

For this reason—he could be trusted.

To throw away his life because of the command given by a young teenager.

If necessary, his own life could be treated like garbage and toss away, if it was for the words of the black-eyed master.

He believed that——he was going to use his life more effectively than anyone else. But——

"I know this might weigh down on you——but Riku, aside from believing in you, I cannot think of any other way."

So, I have to apologize. Because the reason you gave me to die....

Actually, I shouldn't think about dying. My wife and my cute daughter are still waiting for me back in the colony.

No matter what, I must escape, I want to be with my family, enjoy the mundane happiness before dying.

——but, this.

Dying in this place buried in aquamarine ash....What was the difference?

"Ahhh, Ahhhhhhh....!!"

Unfortunately, this was what Ivan thought.

At this timing, to even be afraid of choosing happiness, was very unfortunate.

Damn it. To die without a reason and to die involuntarily.

"Sorryy, I'm very sorry! But, please, please forgive me——"

——in this broken, crazy and tragic world.

Born without a meaning, to live in fear, and to get killed after finding a little bit of happiness.

What was the point to live in this world if it continued endlessly?

——the one who answered this question is that boy, Riku.

It was to protect your friends, protect your family——in order to achieve the future where the war would end, dying was fine.

Fantastic. Simply perfect. The meaning behind one's own existence, what could be better than this?

Even if I die, at least die in style right? Like that——I should shout it out..

"——I! I will die in order to protect my friends and familyyyyyyyy——!!"

Okay——there was no need to be shy regardless of who that was intended for.

This is too cliché. Only humans who were heading to their imminent deaths would understand this point.

"Ha, ha! Oi, Riku! This era, when will it endddd——!"

There was no reply. He also didn't want to know the answer.

——as for [When], it would still be strange to Ivan even if he understood.

This world was so cruel that people couldn't hope.

This world was so cruel that people could only despair.

The past and future were distant, it wouldn't be related to the humans of today.

But now, the only thing needed to be done is to desperately and continuously weave towards the future, to not tolerate any other reverie.

Someone impulsively would definitely get eliminated like trash in the next second.

"Ahh...."

Just like this, keep running ahead.

"Ah——Ahhhhhhhhhh——!"

Just keep going straight.

As long as the body is still alive, just keep shouting.

Even if you fall on the way, someone else shall bear this burden.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh——ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

Humans, aside from this——

"Ahhhh——————————ah!"

Then, the shout disappeared.

Part 5

.....This was the era of——[The Great War].

Humans were both weak and fragile, they couldn't survive as an individual, so they had to live together as a whole [Race].

Personal feelings were ignored, everyone existed to survive as a whole. Working as a whole was a necessity.

For this, although it couldn't be said to be the best, it was the step that gave them the highest chance to win.

Through comprehensive and rational plans, humans could continue living—— no, running.

Covered with ash and mud, sacrificing their little happiness, discarding any bones——until the unknown day when the war ends.

Because of this, the sacrifice of one person to save two others, sacrifice the minority to save the majority.

Regardless of the one sacrificed, saving other persons in the colony was the top priority.

Therefore, other means would not be considered. The one who implemented this——was Riku himself.

From then onwards, he had never regretted it nor feel any remorse for it. But ——

He sprinted full speed without looking back, until he fled to the forest which was supposedly safer. Suddenly——

".....Wuu."

The feeling of an attack that felt like the stomach was dropping struck Riku.

The memory of that man's face gradually blurred. He was feeling a sense of unbearable and strong sense of disgust for something. Ivan——was more of a

man than he was. He was brave, thoughtful and considerate. In Riku's generation, there was no man just like Ivan. Nevertheless, it was love at first sight for his wife. Even though the marriage proposal was late, they were very intimate——

These.

Riku himself, has already.

Used the past tense to narrate it.

"Riku...Oi, Riku!"

Allei who still had tears in his eyes violently grabbed Riku's shoulders.

"Won't you collapse——with all that burden you are carrying?!"

Riku however used soulless and dimly lit eyes to look at him——

"Until then, when someone else inherits my job."

Hearing those light words, Allei fell silent.

Then, the two of them who judged that there was no enemy after them, started walking.

With the colony as the target, they walked. The feeling of heaviness was not just due to the accumulation of thick dust.

The things left behind. The things entrusted over. The things that have to be used to continue weaving——

"....Hey, Riku. This kind of era.....When will it end..."

Both of them didn't know. It was the same question Ivan roared out in the last few seconds of his life.

Riku couldn't answer this question as he looked up at the red sky filled with aquamarine dust.

Suddenly, words that came from someone unknown flashed past his mind——
[There will always be a tomorrow].

The debris floating in the air that exuded a faint aquamarine glow quietly fell and started piling up.

"Ahhh. It will be soon."

If they didn't have this mindset, if they didn't believe, even now.

————this heavy feeling, would probably pressure their knees.

Part 6

The roundtrip would take four days.

To reach the motive [Colony], they had to descend down the aquamarine ash-filled wilderness into the depths of the forest blocked by snow.

At the foot of the tall and steep hill, there was a hidden cave.

From a first glance, it looked like it was a nest belonging to a beast.

But once inside, there would be a few degraded pillars and numerous hanging lamps.

Riku removed one of those lamps and lit it up with a flint.

Relying on the dim lighting from the lamp, they headed deeper into the cave.

While paying attention to avoid any traps used to catch wandering beasts, they continued to press onwards. Afterwards, they saw an outer wall made with sturdy logs. The door was made to prevent lost bears or wolves from passing through.

Of course, if the intruder was someone of the [Other races], such things were ineffective.

Riku went close and knocked the door with a certain rhythmic beat——he then waited.

Squeaking noise then accompanied the slow opening of the door, and the face of teenage boy who was donned in a fur coat emerged out.

"Welcome back. It must have been exhausting."

Riku and Allei gently nodded their heads before heading into the door.

"....Where is Ivan-san?"

Silently, Riku shook his head.

The guard held his breath, looking as if he was holding back something. He then said to Riku once more.

"....It must be tough."

.....

Going through the door, the place started becoming spacious.

Here and now——was a secret hideout that hid close to 2000 people.

Spring water that gushed out from the depths of the cave solved the water problem, while livestock grown on the open areas solved the other.

There was also an estuary that was connected to the shore, allowing salt and fish to be collected.

Compared to the other humans outside that were killed due to meeting [Something], this was a fairly safe stronghold to live in.

The thick layer of rocks here could only sustain at most the minimal force from a stray bullet coming from the war.

——of course, this was only a subjective thought.

Riku walked along the wooden stairs into the colony.

The residents working in the city square cast concerning eyes over to them——

In the midst of a crowd, a young teenage girl ran over towards them.

Although she was petite in stature, her blue eyes as well as bright hair brought some life inside the cave.

The girl who ran in front of Riku opened her mouth and called out.

"Toooo——slowwwww! To what extent are you going to worry your big sister!"

"We were trying our best."

Riku lightly muttered as he laid his pack onto the ground.

"Coron, did anything changed while I'm away?"

"Can you call me Nee-san! How long must I emphasize before you knowwww ——"

The girl known as Coron pursed her lips while nodding vigorously.

"Well, nevermind. There isn't anything important that needs reporting——in any case, take off your dirty cloak and rawhide. A good wash is a must!"

Coron unceremoniously knocked Riku who was covered with dust and said.

"Allei too. Rest well!"

Coron said to Allei who was behind Riku while removing the mask and equipment from Riku. Suddenly, a figure appeared from the crowd.

Before being questioned, Allei replied.

"....As for Ivan, he's dead."

Coron was astonished, and at that moment——another voice from the other end of the square came.

"Daddy!"

Riku turned around and saw a young girl running over unsteadily.

Seeing that figure, Allei gasped.

The breathless young girl that ran over gave Riku a brilliant smile while crying out.

"Where's Daddy!?"

"....."

Riku couldn't answer.

Shining hair and blue eyes, similar to her father's——Ivan's daughter.

"....Nona."

"Hey, Riku. Where's Daddy?"

Nona tugged on Riku's shirt and asked.

However, behind that cheerful face, she felt a little uneasy.

"That, Nona...""

Allei solemnly walked over and opened his mouth, but Riku stopped him with his hand.

At the same time, he used his gaze to stop Coron who was approaching Nona.

————it's fine. Stay.

With a nonchalant tone, Riku said.

"Ivan——your Dad, cannot come back anymore."

————

As if not comprehending what the sentence meant, the girl widened her eyes.

Facing against Riku's silence, the girl left from Riku's side, trying hard not to believe it.

Big teardrops flowed down from her eyes, as her trembling lips opened.

"———why———?"

"....."

"He said he would come back! Daddy asked me to wait for him obediently at home!? Nona has been a good girl——she has been keeping her promise!? Then why———why won't Daddy come back!?"

"....Because he is dead."

"LIAR!!"

Nona's desperate cry echoed in the cave.

"Daddy....Said he would come back, we promised!"

Riku started thinking, from when all this began.

———he was unmoved even after hearing such a pained voice.

"Ivan wanted to keep the promise too. But on the way, we met a Demonia, so he had to be bait."

"I don't care about those things! Why isn't Daddy come back!?"

——Nona was correct, Riku thought.

Why protect, what was the death for, this reason had nothing to do with her.

She only knew, that her favourite Dad wouldn't come back——this was a fact.

"Daddy said it before, that mankind would win!"

"Of course we will win. Ivan fought just for this purpose. To protect us——for the victory of everybody."

Riku started thinking, from when all this began.

——he could calmly spout these emotionless words out.

Nona's small face tightened.

"That isn't victory! If that is victory——"

"——Nona!"

A sharp voice as well as an outstretched hand covered the words the girl was about to utter out next.

——[Wouldn't it be better if Riku died]——

No one knew when a skinny young woman——Nona's mother, Ivan's wife appeared.

She blocked her daughter's mouth with her hand and looked at Riku's face.

Her pair of eyes didn't contain any resentment or hate. At that moment, Riku—— touched his own chest.

——it's alright, no problem.

"Riku...."

Meranda——Nona's mother, used a hoarse voice to call out his name.

Sorry——Riku was about to say on reflex, but he swallowed it back.

"——Ivan became bait in order for us to escape, otherwise, the three of us would die. Because we believe that if the [Harvest] this time was brought back safety, Nona will definitely be protected."

"....Thank you, Riku."

Tears flowed down Meranda's face as she said that.

Gently nodding, she carried her recently orphaned daughter back into the depths of the cave.

Until their figure has completely disappeared from their eyes, Coron had been uttering our prayers for them.

"....Ivan. He was a good person."

———yes, a great man. His wife too, was a great woman.

No complaints, no anger, it couldn't be imagined how she believed someone like him.

The daughter could see through things at once, it was obvious she was very smart.

Because the girl at that time, clearly revealed his true colours as well as his intentions——

——[Liar].

"Riku!"

Without warning, Coron held Riku with a considerate amount of strength, preventing him from falling down.

"——welcome back. It's a blessing that you are okay..."

".....Ahh yes.....I'm back."

Afterwards, Coron deliberately changed the subject with exaggeration.

"Oooo——okay okay! The bath should be heated up by now, so go take a shower now!"

"Shower!"

Allei happily cheered out. Riku frowned and said unhappily.

"Isn't it enough to just wipe the body——waste of fuel."

"O.Nee.-Sa.Ma asks you to go for a bath! You really stink oh!"

Coron said as she smelled her clothing as well as the smell travelling in the air.

Unable to resist anymore, Riku sighed and started pacing.

Walking across the square to the deeper parts of the colony, an older man suddenly called out Riku.

"Oh Riku! That useless thing can finally work!"

"Simon how could you!! Now we are exposed!? I even wanted to surprise Riku!"

"It finally works.....Unless, that telescope?"

Seeing Riku's widened eyes, Coron puffed her chest out proudly and replied.

"Fufu, as long as it's something I've taken apart before, the theory behind it can be easily known!"

"Well, although Coron figured out the theories....Like before, she is still ignorant in the process of manufacturing it."

Under Simon's guide, Riku walked up the stage.

There was a dug out spacious workroom next to the cave——in the center, there was an insignificant and cylindrical item.

About a year ago——the item that was looted from the Dwarves' chariot, was an ultra-long-range telescope.

On its return journey back, it snapped into two. It was supposedly useless—— Riku asked.

"Is it operable without Elemental particles?"

"Un, rest assured. This is a modified version of what Riku previously made. If needed, it still can be combined with more round glass. Even the lens can be adjusted oh?"

"——I see. Two of us died to retrieve this. We had better utilize it well."

When retrieving this, Coron was also present.

Coron who discovered it proposed it to be taken back, Riku agreed as well.

Then——they met Werebeasts on their way back, causing two humans to be sacrificed in the process of fleeing.

However, Simon's hearty voice came back.

"With this thing, the need to go out for investigation would be reduced——this way, they can finally rest in peace right!"

"——ahh, yes."

——this was a lie.

Riku knew Coron used a lot of effort to fix this telescope.

But——this was a momentary consolation. No matter how carefully transferred this was, as long as those guys had the brains to carry out an investigation, this place would immediately be found.

No, even at this moment, a stray bullet may even blow up this entire place.

——just like before, their [Birth place] as well as——the [Place of growth].

But, Coron who understood Riku's worry said cheerily.

"It can put someone at ease to be able to detect the attack right. Having prior knowledge of the danger, escaping should be easy ♪. As for the route, just slowly think about it when the time comes! Okay, let's go!"

The two of them left the workroom. Walking in the direction of his room in the area, Riku asked.

"Those guys who were out investigating?"

"They safely came back. Riku and your team went the furthest, so basically everyone has already came back. ♪"

"Ahhh, yes, so only we were the only ones faced with problems."

Looking at Riku's unchanging self-depreciative face, Coron hesitated.

"Bu...But! Since you are in this position, there must be some harvest right?"

"In the fallen battleship of the dwarves——we found the latest map of the world."

"——! Really!? Isn't that a big harvest!"

Riku nodded his head in reply towards Coron's surprised voice.

"Enemy forces on the map, strategies written in Dwarven language, mingled with some codes. I'd like to interpret and solve these messages——can you leave this to me alone?"

Hearing this, Coron had a complex expression.

"...Un. But first, take a niceee bath okay? Because you are suuuu—pper smelly."

Seeing Coron pinch her nose close while saying those words out, Riku sighed and agreed.

——Riku walked into the narrow room and closed the door.

It was originally dug out from the cave, that's why it was narrow. The accumulation of numerous books and items made it even more narrow.

There was a small table in the middle for eating. A drawing table was also present deeper into the room, standing next to a pallet bed.

Placing the hanging lamp onto the table, the items that were in the pack were taken out and placed onto the table.

The most attention grabbing items were three——three overlapping maps copied by three individuals with their hand. Using the light, Riku confirmed that there was nothing missing nor were there any stains. This meant that Ivan's death was not in vain.

....Taking a deep breath, Riku surveyed his surroundings.

Nobody. The distance between this room and another room was considerably far, the door was also thick enough.

Done with the [Routine checks], Riku inhaled deeply and touched his chest——

——with a Kacha——the [Lock] opened.

"——what do you mean by————NOT IN VAIN! YOU BASTARD HYPOCRITE!!"

While eating, Riku waved his fist around, scolding himself.

The newest world map. The diagram of the enemy forces. The Dwarf's strategies.

Ahhh! Yes very important! A very big harvest. This could very well determine the entire fate of the colony!

It can be used to speculate the position of bases and resources. Furthermore, we can prevent ourselves from straying into some other race's territories.

And to get all these, dangerous [Investigation] activities had been ongoing for more than five years.

The earliest began from the nearby area, and then a rough map of the world was plotted.

The location of dangerous zones and resources. The map had to be constantly updated with newer information. Only until recently has it been extremely handy.

And adding the intelligence brought back today, the credibility of our map will greatly increase.

——but, for this map, how many people have died?

Riku knew this answer——their looks, their names.

It could be said that he even remembered when, where and how they died.

47 people——no, an increase, 48 people.

——for every one of them, Riku had asked all of them to [Go and die].

Riku didn't inform all of them directly, there were some who indirectly understood his intention.

But regardless of which, the person who gave the command of [Death] was undoubtedly Riku.

——sacrificing one person to save the others, sacrifice the minority to save the majority.

——if a situation where others would be harmed and suffer, suicide would be the best.

This rule was developed.

In this desperate situation, even if it's little, conveying to everyone of the final struggles——

Couldn't be anyone else except for Riku himself. But——

"——even if this continues, then....What can...?"

For two people, a person gets killed.

For four people, two people get killed.

This endless cycle has repeated until the final result, where 48 people died.

Continuing to live under these sacrifices, the population of the colony now——was not more than 2000 people.

——hey, Riku, answer this: When will this continue until?

It would end one day right——until the day where [For 1001 people, 999 gets killed] happens right?

Or maybe——until the day where only [One man is left] right?

"....Ha——ha, hahahahahaha————!"

To tell a child who lost his father that [This is mankind's victory] with such a vicious look!

Deceiving everyone with the guise that the sacrifice couldn't be helped, then I began to rely on these lies, hanging a lock on my heart to abandon these negative feelings.

——vomit. The sense of disgust for himself started to burn his throat.

Am I clueless about what shame is, or have I forgotten about it?

How low am I going to stoop until I am satisfied——you bastard!!

.....

"Ha.....Ha, ha...."

.....When he realized it, the table was cracked.

The fist he has been using to punch the wood was embedded in the table, with blood starting to spill out.

The gushing blood that headed into his head started to cool down.

Where did all those cold thoughts go——he asked his heart.

Satisfied?——ahhh, how can I be satisfied.

Feel like crying?——ahh, how can crying change anything.

Then is it enough——ahh, of course it's enough, asshole.

I don't have the right to cry, if it must flow——then blood shall fulfill its job.

Bloodshed is compatible for someone despicable, disgusting, jerk, and a lying bastard like me.

——compared to tears which were on a higher level, bloodstained hands were a better fit.

Closing the eyes, the hand was brought unto the chest——thoughts began to form.

——kacha.

Accompanied with a heavy bang, the [Lock] was hung——this completed the process.

Like usual, the demands remained the same, the cold, calm and thorough person was forged out.

Never forget the person who gave everyone hope, the [Adult] with the heart of steel——[Riku], is complete.

Closing the heart, the mind cooled down and Riku slowly opened his eyes.

Then——looking at the horrifying scene of broken table and scattered blood, Riku sighed.

"......Wood is obviously not a cheap resource.....Ah, asshole....What are you going to do."

Riku pulled out his hand stuck in the wood and wearily complained.

No pain——just like the calm heart, feelings were also frozen.

"....There is no excuse for this——no, wait, turning it into firewood can destroy the evidence while also adding the resource count. Two birds one stone. Eating directly on the floor should be fine——"

——outside the door.

Backed up against the door and closely listening was Coron.

.....This was customary. The reason to allow him to be quiet was for this reason alone.

In order to allow Riku to adjust his heart, to allow Riku's heart to accept the fact that Ivan was sacrificed——the necessary procedure.

It was important to that little brother of hers. If not.....He would surely be broken.

——or maybe, he might already be broken.

"....."

Coron couldn't say anything, like this——aside from listening, she couldn't do anything else.

Only 18 years old——it wouldn't be weird to call him a teen.

But to place the lives of 2000 people in the colony under his jurisdiction——no matter what, was too much to handle.

However——there was no one capable of doing it except for him.

The guide of two thousand people who lost hope, the mentor that makes the most appropriate choice when necessary.

Carrying such power, as well as the will of the people. He still could move forward without falling——

The only person who could steel his heart——in this world, was Riku.

If someone like him was lost——everyone would be trembling [Preys] waiting for death to come.

——like this, they would become meaningless and useless organisms——even Coron was sure of this point.

——continue the [Endless] great war.

This wasn't a metaphor. The war was at a stage where no one remembered

when it began.

Human developed their culture, while also being cleared out like weeds.

It was silly to even call that kind of thing history, it was just too miserable.

It was casually written facts that was handed down generations....

The world where the stars are smothered, the earth is cracked and the red sky that had no day nor night.

The common history books were lost, the meaning of the passage of time——couldn't be understood.

With the era stagnating, the sky filled with [Black ash(Death)], turning the world to be more violent——but humans were powerless against it.

Taking one step out of the colony, the scythe from the grim reaper would've already reached their necks.

Even facing against wild animals, if they charged headfirst, death would only await.

Meeting against gods and their dependents——the [Different race], just by a glance, destruction would've already rained upon.

Just by coming into contact with a stray bullet, the colony, the city, the culture would get destroyed.

.....No end.

No end, no end.

No end no end no end no end no end——the repetition of death and destruction in this world.

If hell existed, it would be here, Coron thought——but even so, mankind must live on.

——nobody wanted to die without a reason.

——because of one's own [Heart], nobody would accept dying without a reason.

In such a world, to maintain such a thing as if it was normal——can it even be called normal in the first place.

——five years ago.

The colony took in Riku and Coron from their home because the exchange between the Flügels and the Dragonias ended.

Those who were previously the leaders all got struck with despair and death, continuously sobbing until they found a new cave.

While all the adults were lamenting on one side, the 13-year-old child saw the cave and said.

"Here, is a convenient habitat, it can be used for the colony."

Everyone who lost everything a couple of hours before, naturally said [Next].

The sound of a roar resounded.

——what could that do.

——that way, those guys would deem us as inexistent.

Facing against this theory produced from the despair and lamentation, the teen boy frowned and answered——

"Yes, we do not exist——we are not the same as those who [Don't exist], we literally [Become inexistent].

Afterwards, the teenage boy said out the methods to achieve that.

"We do not exist, we cannot exist, so we cannot be perceived——we shall become [Dead]."

His eyes were even darker than the depths of the deep cave.

"Using all kinds of possible means to escape and hide our presence——because someday, someone will see it——the end of the war."

Since if nobody could do anything, at least inherit the powers.

Since if nobody could do anything, at least do it for the successors.

"Swear upon the commands, and for all those who would follow me——follow me!"

——thirteen-years-old.

The words of the child whose hometown was destroyed twice, heavily echoed in the cave.

With his soulless and truthful eyes. However, he gave the people who lost their reason of existence their reason of existence——as well as the meaning of death.

It has been five years since the thirteen-year-old Riku was appointed as the leader of over a thousand lives.

The number of deaths in the five-year period was——48 people.

Coron's feelings——were incredible small.

But Riku didn't understand. Even if he did, it would still be crushed due to his responsibility of commanding people to their death.

The death of 48 people——was all due to the [Expeditions].

If the colony increased to more than 2000, because of the lack of food, Infanticide(killing newborn babies) would occur, leading to the increment of the number of deaths.

Moreover, if they were discovered by other different races, hundreds or thousands of people may get killed off like foam.

The fact that only 48 people died in the last five years, was no doubt due to Riku's achievements.

——so, everyone believed in Riku.

——so, everyone would entrust their lives on his shoulders.

But——sometimes everyone forgot about this. Then when they remembered it

they would feel remorseful before apologizing and thanking Riku.

And now, he said it out because he remembered all of this.

——Riku was the same, the scythe of the grim reaper was pointed at his neck. And on that neck——an addition of 2000 people was also hung.

——.....

Riku came out of his room. Coron tried her best to pretend that she didn't notice the injury on his fist.

"Riku sure is amazing.....Very hardworking. Nee-san can guarantee...."

"————save the comforting words. I'll be heading to the bath."



Looking at Riku's lightless eyes——Coron who couldn't hold back hugged him.

The limit was reaching. In this world, to continue living a normal life while also maintaining the existence of two thousand people that was like a bonfire——was impossible. At this rate, little brother, Riku, would definitely break!!

"Hey——Coron."

"....Didn't I ask you to call me Coron-Nee-san right...What?"

"When will it end——this era."

In the past, someone said that there will never be [Rain that doesn't stop] and [Dawn that never comes from the night]——

How long would they have to wait before a human would see the day aquamarine ash stops falling down?

How long before the sun could be seen?

Yes, it would end one day——it's not perpetual, that was supposedly the case. But....

In a human's perspective, this war.....it feels as if it will cease to end.

"So they then asked. When will——it, ah, Awhoaaaaaa!? Whaaaaaaaat's wrongggg?!"

Tet who was playing the game while looking at the distance and saying the story frantically shouted.

"Too, too cunning, des.....purposely said such a story, sobs, made Izuna cry so as to win the game, des."

"Soooo, sorry! That topic was a bit too dark!!"

Tet apologized to Izuna who had huge tears tumbling down her face and thought.

To have the personality of crying after hearing that kind of story——as expected, this child is extremely precious.

In fact, when this story was told in the past to other different races, they would simply say that [This was natural] and prevaricate.

That was because even though 6000 years had passed, different races still held mutual-belittling over one another.

The young girl who said this story was too much and saddening——is truly a [Normal child].

"I'm sorry. But, this is all true....This was the time period of the world in the [Great War]."

"...Ivan, died, des..."

"Yes, dead. Humans——if touched by any Demonia before the [Ten Oaths]——no."

"If bitten by any Werebeast, they are simply dead....This is the world's weakest creature oh."

"——!! Izuna would never do that kind————....."

Seeing how Izuna was about to say how————she would never do that kind of thing————and swallowed her words back, Tet felt admiration.

Yes...She couldn't say that she would [Never] do it. This young girl is very frank and smart.

Having an accurate understanding of those things in the past, was no different than using games to do things in Elchea.

On top of that, she correctly felt the unreasonable and wrong things.

"....That kind of thing is wrong, des.....absolutely, weird, des..."

"Yes——that is the case, the world was crazy too."

Indeed, truthfully, the world became unreasonably illogical.

If a child was to accept it as if it was [Natural]——that would be unusual.

"But! A dark topic would be too boring eh~♪ Let's change it a bit okay~□ "

In order to change the heavy atmosphere, Tet said while wiping away Izuna's tears.

"Do, you know about the Ex-Machinas?♪"

"....Tenth position of the <16 races>....Ex-Machina....Don't fool me, des."

"As expected~□ , you've learned a lot, impressive impressive!"

While appeasing the sniffing Izuna, Tet continued the game and said:

"Yes, Ex-Machina....Its existence, a race whose body is made of machines. The Old Deus that became [Inactive] due to the long time——have already forgotten about the Ex-Machinas, they were a race created by Old Deus in the past."

"...Grandpa said once, des. Once hit, strategize, the second time won't work. In the great war....the [God Killers], were only the Flügels and the Ex-Machinas, des. So——"

Yes, that was well said, Izuna continued.

"——[Don't fail, or else it will cause a lot of trouble], des."

"Per~Fect answer~~~!! As a reward for the small red flower, I shall continue stroking your fur."

Tet had a smile across his face as he stroked and stroked and stroked.

"Then, that was the Ex-Machinas——one day, Riku met them."

Surprised! Like a startled kitten, Izuna jumped up and pulled a distance away from Tet.

"————unun, Riku suffered an attack from that extremely dangerous Ex-Machina race. And it was at a speed where a human couldn't react and perceive."

"No, nono, didn't you promise not to say such a topic anymore, des!"

"Eh~? I just said that a dark topic would be too boring, so we should change the topic oh."

"I can't hear you I can't hear you, des!!"

"It's no use trying to cover your eyes oh~——what the Ex-Machina used to attack Riku was, [Pseudo·Forested Skyshot]. The Elven species' magical weapon——a weapon that can release numerous vacuum cutting blades that can destroy anything!"

"Ooo....Ahh.....!?"

"Blowing away the black dust, Riku's coat and equipment got crushed and destroyed...."

"Ah~~~, ahh~~~ can't hear it, des, can't hear it, des!"

"Then, Riku-dono who fell down——"

"NYAHHHHHHHH~~~~~~AHHHH!!"

"Kiss, then she said [Nii, I can't resist it anymore, turn me into a woman]~□ "

.....

.....?

"No, wasn't he chopped up? Des."

"Oh, I said his items and clothing were chopped up, Riku-dono was un□ harmed~"

Izuna, for the first time since she was born.....wanted to beat up a man.

Chapter 2 - 1×1=Aimless

Part 1

.....Okay, let's organize the current situation.

My name is Riku, 18 years old, a virgin——....What? Can't I be one——!?

——wrong.

Wrong, wrong wrong wrong, even though my mind is in a mess and questions are piling up messily, but for now——calm down first, and organize what exactly happened.

Even though I can't comprehend what is going on, but I'm currently in the worst situation one can expect.

Firstly, prioritize my heart's question——what happened, what is happening and what is going to happen, this.

Confirm the state of the [Lock]....No problem. Regardless of the inexplicable things that are happening, the lock must always stay locked. Then, grasp the present situation in a second, no a millionth of a second. Or else——

".....[Investigate]....Organizing current situation...."

It looks like a monster resembling a naked young girl is straddling my body. However, I have no means of escape even if she were to do anything to me!

I must accelerate my thinking——to a speed where even time seems to have stopped——

Part 2

Riding on a horse, Riku headed to the ruins mapped out by the dwarves, east of the Colony.

It was an Elven city destroyed by an attack from a Flügel.

Information about the elves were extremely precious and important.

However, there wasn't any loot on the battlefield, and the intel collected was insufficient.

In any case, the Flügels didn't employ any weapons on the battlefield; they could simply cast magic without a medium to rid them of their enemies.

But on the way, the falling of the Black ash became more intense, causing Riku to flee to a nearby ruin to avoid distress——there, he came into contact with a [Different race].

Aside from the slight mechanical properties seen, the body was of a normal naked young girl——an [Ex-Machina].

One of the more violent races. But there wouldn't be any problems if she wasn't provoked. That was supposed to be the case.

Riku intended to ignore her and continue moving.

——in an instant, Riku was down on the floor.

He was pressed onto the ground while the surrounding Black ash and his equipment disappeared.

Although he couldn't comprehend what just happened....Riku was still alive.

Facing against Riku whose upper body was stripped naked, the Ex-Machina stuck on his body and said.

"Nii, I can't resist it anymore. Turn me into a woman."

——

....Did I lose my memory?

When I fell down. The possibility of me hitting my head is high.

If I'm not mistaken, she expressionlessly said some weird things as if in a narration, and then, my chastity——my first kiss was taken away.

....I seemed to have grasped onto everything. That was the first question, [What happened].

Continuing on to question two——just when I'm about to think about [What is happening]....

"[Problem]....In,comprehensible."

The Ex-Machina who tightly clung onto Riku's body muttered out. She was emotionless, expressionless and like a machine.

——...Un, I'm still quite competent, Riku's heart boasted.

He used his knowledge and reason to suppress his spinal reflex of wanting to open his mouth.

Which means he suppressed his urge to yell out [I'm the one who is supposed to feel that this is incomprehensible right you jerk!].

——[Ex-Machina], even among all of the Great War monsters, they were an extremely special race.

Firstly, they were made out of machines. Even creatures cannot compare against their coordination and movements as a [Cluster] population.

That means——an individual's find means the entire population's find and being hostile to one means being hostile to the entire race.

One of the reasons why this race was regarded as an extremely special race was due to their way of fighting.

After receiving an attack, they could figure out and replicate the type of attack in less than a second, before quickly firing it back.

Regardless of whether it was an Elf's magic, the attack from a dwarf's weapon, or even a Dragonias's breath——it can be replicated and fired back.

Their arms were constantly evolving in the long Great War. It could be theorized that the Ex-Machina——are the most brutal race without any limits to their strengths.

However, they had another special property.

——that is, [Never instigating].

They would retaliate if they were under attack, but they wouldn't adopt a hostile attitude when they aren't attacked.

Therefore, the data that the dwarves recorded down——[A dangerous race not to be touched].

——the knowledge above, forced Riku to shut his mouth.

In other words, if he was designated as an [Enemy]——the entire human species will be destroyed.

——then, [What exactly is happening] !?

"What is wrong with this guy!!"

Against such contradiction with the intel he knew, Riku cried out in his heart.

Never instigating. So he was going to ignore her and move on——which spiralled into an awkward scene between the two.

Even after he had organised all his information correctly, Riku still couldn't understand the present situation and the situation where there was no instigation.

The young mechanical girl continued while on his body.

"<Speculation>——because the setting to fulfill this condition, is not sufficient?"

This question was phrased as if a speculation has failed——Riku was hesitant about the answer to that question.

Human beings are dead. They cannot exist so they cannot be perceived——so should he remain silent and not respond?

"....Let's not care about likes and dislikes first. On whose permission did you obtain to take away my chastity?"

"No"———she replied using [Human language].

At least, he was sure that he was identified as a human.

While this fact in itself would bring shivers down a human's spine, if he was to

ignore or reject her now, she would possibly declare humans as [Hostile].

Comply to rationality———[Now, talk to her].

———Don't act rashly before grasping the situation.

She didn't answer the question directed to herself as she continued speaking expressionlessly with a nonchalant tone.

"<Read> Set 072——[I, its not like I'm doing this because I like you. Accident, yes this is an accident]"

....It was read without any sentimental feelings, just like the [Nii] from before. This caused Riku's mind to blank out.

——what is with this situation.

".....<Confirm> Person's temperature, pulse, genitals, did not react."

"Can you please stop peeking into someone's physiological reactions?"

Riku tried to put on a calm look——while his heart who found a troublesome situation cried out.

She was capable of reading humans' physiological response. The possibility of being deemed a hostile target after [Lying] was——very high.

As if understanding Riku's heartfelt worries, the Ex-Machina girl asked once more.

"<Doubt> Speculated that human's carnal desires would activate in the present situation. Wrong speculation?"

"...That is so, yah. The answer would vary from different humans."

——he cannot lie. But her purpose can't be understood either. He was unable to comprehend the current situation.

If she could read physiological responses, then Riku's fear would've been seen through in a glance. What exactly was her motive....?

"<Question> Did not feel sexual excitement from this machine——because

machines lack [Charm]?"

While thinking——a brave question was thrown at him, causing Riku to feel dizzy.



Facing against a disaster that would bring forth genocide upon being deemed as a hostile target, while also being thrown a question that would trouble a human being——also the fact that lying wasn't permitted.

....After some determination, Riku carefully observed the Ex-Machina who was straddled on his body.

——she looked similar to a ten-year-old human girl. In contrast with her black hair and white body, she had ruby eyes. She was undoubtedly a beautiful girl ——if not for the two cables resembling tails that were sticking out her body.

"From an objective point of view, I think you are very cute. To arouse me, the best would be someone from the same race. And also you are too childish."

...How was this answer. Neither lie nor deny——as a virgin, this was not a perfect answer.

Riku felt a sense of accomplishment, but the Ex-Machina girl immediately questioned him again.

"<Doubt> Without experience, still want to choose the person?"

"Do you really think virgins have no right to choose anything..."

——while answering, Riku's thoughts gradually stabilized and he began to see the current [Situation].

From the negotiations, Riku had a doubt in his head. Assuming this doubt was correct——

"Its about time....Could you tell me [Why did you look for me]?"

——question. It was dangerous to ask this kind of imprudent question, but.

From the available information, it could be predicted that——there was a crisis more serious than this.

The Ex-Machina girl immediately replied with an indifferent tone.

"<Answer> Want to resolve the independent language between humans."

"....Independent language?"

Riku repeated——praying and hoping that this was consistent with his predictions.

But the Ex-Machina girl simply nodded her head and mechanically said.

"<Affirmative>——the independent language known as [Heart]."

"<Confirm> Mutual-skinship——the independent language that requires skin contact. Speculated Ex-Machinas do not have, the behavior of [Heart]. Imitating movements, judged that this machine can also read [Heart].....Wrong?"

——Really.

It looks like the bad feeling was slowly getting fulfilled, Riku gave a bitter smile.

Being wrestled like this, the intention to commit suicide was present, but——

Able to speak human's language, able to speculate out human's sexuality even though it was incorrect, and able to grasp onto a human's physiological responses.

Facing against these facts and concerns, Riku should start feeling self-depreciative.

Humanity wasn't of a verge of being revealed, they were already seen through long ago.

——we were observed. I'm afraid, we have been observed since long ago.

"——yes, if skinship would allow the [Heart] to convey message, then humanity wouldn't be worried anymore."

The Ex-Machina's gaze was on him as she started to display actions akin of going into a deep thought——

Riku's ideas gradually cleared out as he thought of the confusion from before.

No matter the reason, the Ex-Machinas were eyeing on humanity——they were

spied on.

It was ridiculous for them to hide themselves when in fact, their entirety was understood by the Ex-Machinas.

In any case, it might either be best or worse scenerio to get spied on by the Ex-Machinas, regardless of their intentions.

The race deemed as the most dangerous by the other races was watching them ——this point was enough for destruction.

——what should I do? Nothing, just go with the norms.

It wasn't a good method——it was the best method. Nothing more

Placing my hand onto my chest, I start to chant a spell as usual.

But this time, there was a slight difference——sealing it. ——seal it up, close it, forget it all.

Drive off the memory that this hateful Ex-Machina can wipe off humanity like dust, killing us all.

Whether feelings, memories, horror, shaking, anxiety, remove all of them—— become an undead.

There were two motives. Find out all intention, and then proceed with [Induction].

Proceed with deep breaths. I have a [Friendly relation] with this Ex-Machina—— this gave me confidence.

Deceive your physiological responses. Deceive your memory. Chain yourself in everything——install the [Lock].

Can it be done? Of course it can be done [Riku]——if it's you.

Her motive was to understand the [Heart], if that's the case, then she does not possess a——[Heart].

Its easier to deceive someone without a heart than another human.

Then——deceiving is just like breathing for this guy, acting as a natural human scum all along.

Right?——then, no, more problems——

——*kacha*

After hearing the sound of the lock that was several times heavier than the usual, Riku opened his eyes.

——there, was a long black-haired——[Girl].

[She] finished her long thoughts and solemnly narrated about the views of her wrong speculation.

"......<Understood> Skinship is metaphor for procreation——[Request], undergo procreation with this machine——"

"Un. I refuse——it should be said like this right?"

A somewhat tough rejection. It may be a statement that would be considered having hostile intention.

But his thoroughly sober head unconsciously made this judgement. No problems. Furthermore——

"What kind of sorrows am I going through to rely on other species other than humans to have sex. And compared to that——"

——squeeze out the information needed.

"The Ex-Machinas are linked together with something called the cluster right. I'm sorry but I don't have exhibitionism."

"<Negative>——this machine was relieved from the [Cluster]."

——yes, this was the intelligence.

It was predicted beforehand that this would happen. But these thoughts were too idealistic...

"Oh, why?"

——respond back with a proper attitude. Confused, then ask. Even though the reason I speculated should be close.

"<Answer>——this machine tried to analyze if the Ex-Machinas had [Heart], [Self] or [Soul]."

——the results can be expected. If she is an Ex-Machina.

"<Results> Failure of theories caused constant contradicting results, this machine was released from the link and abandoned."

Which means, self-referential paradox.

Finally, Riku confirmed the reason why this Ex-Machina was making unrelated actions.

——no, she is broken.

For Riku, this was really great. Even though he was still uneasy, this was slightly better than the other worse possibilities.

Come, [Riku] with [Friend relations]? The next step should be to show concern for her right?

"....Oh, which means....You."

Riku frowned upon the thought of saying words of worry——but the [Young girl] nodded her head in exaggeration.

"<Conclusion> There is no problem in desiring to ravage against this machine. Although there isn't, hole."

"I won't! In any case, just no!"

Maintaining her expressionless face, she nodded and declared.

"<Proposal> Agree to take this machine to the [Colony], allowed to slowly ravage."

"It's not because of this question...eh."

——[Finished]

The colony was exposed——how good could that be.

For other colonies other than the humans, they could be discovered very easily ——this in itself was obvious.

Compared to those things, he wanted to confirm if she didn't hide the matter with the colony.

There were only two possibilities.

But regardless of which, it wouldn't turn into a problem. As a result——the necessary intel would cobble together.

It was in order to allow her to create the [Role] she was looking forward to.

Once again, the magical sound of a *kacha*.

This was what she was looking forward to——it appears to have a [Heart], but in actuality was closed off to form [Riku].

As if being unaware towards Riku's heart, the young girl nodded her head seriously, understanding something.

"<Understood> Because this machine's charm cannot be felt, so reproductive behavior was rejected."

"Ah——, you don't understand at all..."

The young girl nodded again and decided to leave Riku's body.

Riku who was freed straightened his body while the young girl sat down in front of him and declared.

"<Proposal>——game to be carried out."

".....What?"

"<Open>——game 001 [Chess]——"

Saying so, from the hand of the young girl——no, from the palm of her hand which faced the ground.

From the void, rays appeared to form an outline of a board——it instantiated.

——this was instantiated, looking at Riku whose eyes were widened as the Ex-Machina displayed magic from her arms, the young girl quietly said.

"<victory> If this machine was to win, request to bring this machine back to colony, carrying out reproductive behavior."

"——then, if I win?"

"<Answer> Bring this machine back to colony, allowing the process of carrying out reproduction."

"THERE ISN'T ANY DIFFERENCE RIGHT!?"

Facing against her inorganic face that had a complacent look as if she proposed a great idea, Riku couldn't help but shout out.

But at the same time, Riku thought——this was a good opportunity.

"Hmmm, however, nevermind. I accept this challenge, but I require a change in the conditions."

Even if it's not the best, it would be the most appropriate step——

After a long time of having a mind associating with death, a combination of complex strategies was instantly formed.

After using a move to attain loads of information, another step would be enough to turn the tables around and make this profitable.

Come, to what extent can I fulfill this. It's time for you to show your ability——fraud master.

"If I win, I request that you release me and not follow me back to the [Colony]."

Although he said so, Riku understood. Winning in this game was [Impossible].

If the rumors stand that Ex-Machinas are good with analysis and parsing——having good calculation like a machine, then there would be no competitors for chess and the like.

So, the young girl nodded and replied.

"<Accepted> No problems. As long as the victory conditions remain the same for this machine, no change."

——yes, you must agree. However, the problem does not [Lies in there].

"Nono, your victory conditions must change too."

Reason is——

"If you want to understand the thing known as [Heart], blindly undergoing reproduction won't allow you to understand it."

"...."

In contrast to the young girl who had fallen silent, Riku's mind was clear and thinking.

There were two reasons why she would utter out [Colony].

To calmly state the facts——or for other purposes, to cause a [Containment].

Although her motives were unclear, from the way she accepted the conditions, some things could be determined out.

If she had other motives, she would definitely say that she would change her victory conditions herself. Or else the whole plan is ruined.

Was it possible to induce a state of confusion to an Ex-Machina? However, the Ex-Machina maintained her expressionless face, widened her eyes and asked.

"——<Amazed>.....<Question> How to understand?"

.....

Unless——what she really said was all true——?

The most desirable, overly optimistic possibility to arouse suspicion in people ——but, if...

What she said was all true, using clever deception——seal her and use her.

"If you win, until the moment you understood [Heart], I will allow you to stay with me."

"......<Question> Understand [Heart], possible if stay by your side?"

Allow the intellectual machine to understand, using the best reasons, to try and form it out.

"[Heart] isn't a material."

"......."

"[Heart] is something that is difficult to express with words. It is something only understood with mutual-understanding. Under the circumstances that you aren't discovered as an Ex-Machina, never leave my side——you would understand after spending some time, don't reject the opportunity to be able to connect to others spiritually."

"........."

The Ex-Machina girl continued her silence and watched Riku's eyes.

Seeing her red pupil, Riku was convinced——he was being [Identified] if he was lying.

But it was useless. I didn't utter a lie out.

.....After a deep thought, the young girl nodded.

"<Accepted> Then begin the game."

——it appears I avoided the worst situation. At least the possibility of avoiding it is high.

"Ah, before that, can I add another condition."

Yes, he fearlessly smiled——then.

"I'm almost freezing to death. You destroyed my clothes, could you help me replace it?"

With his snot freezing, Riku pleaded while his teeth chattered.

——the game was simply one-sided.

Unable to see his odds of winning, Riku lost on his 29th move. It was all according to plan.

"Damn, I lost...It can't be helped, I'll just take you to the [Colony] to fulfill the conditions."

To have a highly calculative Ex-Machina as an opponent——it was impossible for Riku who could only predict the next move.

Because of this——he proposed a condition favorable for the one losing.

"....."

The Ex-Machina girl watched as Riku faked a smile, not forgetting to show an expression of regret.

——it could be said to be miraculous, for the development to go according to plan.

Although her motives were unknown, there was no meaning for her to play with a human using such complicated strategies.

It was only her who was interested in humans——which meant that other Ex-Machinas didn't have a tinge of interest towards the human race. This meant that her race was probably not eyeing onto the humans.

With that being said, since the game itself didn't have any binding force, any negligence wasn't allowed to——

"<Question> Why do you exhibit behavior of deep regret?"

"——what?"

For a moment, his breathing stopped.

His [Act] of being regretful was seen through, Riku couldn't help but ponder——

this was supposed to be impossible.

Because he completely closed off his feelings, it was just an interpretation. Up to now even Riku himself couldn't comprehend if those feelings were his true thoughts. However, if his [True thoughts] were seen through, then—

The Ex-Machina girl gazed into Riku's watchful eyes——there should be nothing reflected in those pitch-dark eyes.

"<Concluded> Existence of person's [Heart] confirmed. There is value to continue analyzing."

——the meaning behind this sentence, Riku did not understand.

However, the Ex-Machina girl, looked as if she showed a smile——it was probably an illusion.

"...Ah, speaking of which, I haven't introduce myself yet."

Riku only thought of it now. Because of the emergencies he faced in succession, he had completely forgotten about it.

"That, my name is Riku. How about you——?"

"<Answer>——Üc207Pr4f57t9"

"...Ah? Uh, what? Is that...A name?"

"<Correct> This machine's individual identification number——is it not synonymous with [Name]?"

"...No, if you want to understand a human's heart in the colony, you should have a more human-like name——"

This sentence caused the little girl to be shrouded in a deep thought.

"<Question> Can name be freely set by said individual?"

"Well——there is such a thing."

Then, the girl wrapped herself in deep thoughts.

Suddenly, she wrapped her fingers in her hair and announced her name.

"<Answer>——[Shuwaruvi]"

"Too long, it confuses people, and it doesn't seem like a name. Dismissed with the above three reasons——calling yourself [ShuVi] would do though."

Riku readily rejected her proposal. But, it seemed to be an illusion——

"....<Puzzled> Said free to choose yet revised....<Rebuttal> Should call me yourself from the start."

Riku always wondered, the girl looked as if she was protesting in a fit of anger.

——it must be my illusion, Riku once again came down with this judgement.

"Okay, I'll tidy up for a while then I'll take you to the colony——but before that, there are a few precautions."

Bending one of his finger, he said.

"The Ex-Machinas are unable to have a mutual-understanding heart. Is because they fear it, they are scared of having mutual-understanding."

"........<Correct>"

Seeing the Ex-Machina who was named ShuVi nod her head, Riku continued.

"So aside from changing the name, could you change the tone of your voice that instantly determines the fact that you are an Ex-Machina?"

"——<Read> Simulated personality 1610——"

ShuVi's gaze rose, and she started to have an expression as if pondering.

"——hey hey, then~ Onii-chan Will this do?"

"You're kidding, rejected."

Expressionless, without any undulating sound, on top of that, to add unnecessary tone. Riku flat out rejected this.

".....<Paradox> I have carefully reviewed over...."

"I already have a sister, so this setting cannot be accepted."

".....<Request> Please provide me with the best setting that suits the situation."

Riku ignored ShuVi who looked like she was still angry and began to seriously think.

To be honest, he left alone and forced Coron to watch his home for five days.

Under these circumstances, Riku brought a girl back home.

——the best setting would be——

"......Then, pretend you are a survivor who was dragged into the war."

".....———"

"You're timid, quiet. It would mean trouble if you were found out, so don't say too much. And stop using the speech pattern that instantly denotes you as an Ex-Machina——is that fine?"

ShuVi intently paid attention to what Riku said with her heart.

".....Un."

Just a full 10 seconds.

After some careful considerations, the Ex-Machina girl——ShuVi, nodded.

Then——

In her originally inorganic expressionless face, shadows started to cover her face.

She quietly——opened her mouth.

"....I, understand....Is this.....Okay?"

——

She even had a corresponding expression——because of how it resembled a genuine human, Riku was momentarily stunned.

"....This is, an act——right?"

It was as if there was a new person.

If not for the exposed machinery parts, even Riku would've been fooled thinking that she was human.

It would have been better if it was simply unnatural, weird and made no sense ——this was what Riku had expected——

But ShuVi shook her head and replied.

"....Acting? No....Imitated the proposed setting,.....By tracing....People.."

Riku didn't understand the meaning behind those words.

But in that case she wouldn't be recognized as an Ex-Machina. The next step was——

"Okay, firstly, you need to put on some appropriate clothes."

————yes, no matter how skillful the facial expressions and language are disguised, a human girl wouldn't walk outside stark naked.

"Hide the machinery parts up. A hood would be enough to cover the head—— listen carefully, absolutely never allow anyone to see your body oh?"

ShuVi nodded in response.

".....Un. Absolutely, only allow Riku....."

.....

"Although I have a subtle feeling that something is wrong, well——nevermind. I'll

count on you then."

Looking from a wider range of view, Riku was expecting lots of commotion when he returns home.

Despite the anxiety welling in his heart, Riku decided to give the thought and started the return trip back to the colony.

He also brought along an extremely troublesome gift——

Part 4

"....Riku, are we, there yet...?"

"Ahhh. Really. I can't believe you."

——the one brought back was Riku.

The distance it took for a horse to run for five days, ShuVi did it in a few hours ——while carrying Riku.

Arriving near the colony, ShuVi placed Riku down.

Riku was at a point where he was beyond shocked, he was stunned by this unreasonable race.

"Your movements...Really don't require any Elemental particles?"

"Not, required. ShuVi's [Body]....Is below...Average, compared to...Ex-Machinas."

——this feat was considered below average....Eh. Furthermore, it was done without using any armament.

"If armament, is used....A few minutes....Enough.."

——but first, place the extra-dimensional speech aside .

The problem comes after that. Riku once again re-examined ShuVi's appearance.

ShuVi was wearing an XL hooded robe, he at least managed to hide the non-removable ears and head from being exposed. But...

"The problem is the tail that is protruding out, right."

"....No, tail.....Suspected to be nerve connecting to Elemental Gallery...."

"Well, regardless of that, can you roll it into a ball and hide it?"

ShuVi was unsupportive of that action, but those two lively cables looked like tails no matter the situation.

".....No....This....ShuVi's....Power source....This explanation, is second time..."

Ahhh, I know that, Riku started to sigh.

Initially, it was intended for ShuVi to dress-up as a human, the Elves———camouflage magic could efficiently complete this task.

But the problem would be the detection of the Elemental particles within the colony.

So, as a desperate measure, they thought of a way to forcefully hide it....

This tail——was supposed to be a nerve that connected to the Elemental Gallery——ShuVi was moving because of it.

It was similar to when a human eats food, the behavior of [Ingesting] instead of using Elemental particles.

Therefore, there wouldn't be any Elemental particles reading——but the tail in this case was exposed.

Scratching his head, Riku said with low self-esteem.

"...No matter, at this point, we'll just insist that it is a [Decoration]. I'll repeat this one more time, if you are exposed, it will be impossible to understand the [Heart] ok? Resolve yourself to play as a human."

"....Un, understood....."

Renewing their determination, the two of them entered the cave through a narrow tunnel.

Until they met the young door guard——

"Ah, Ri——"

He was going to greet Riku loudly, but Riku's panicky hand gestures stopped him.

"It, it's been tough on you.....Everyone was worried about you, ah."

The young guard who quietened down his face, noticed ShuVi beside Riku and had a suspicious look.

Hush, Riku once again used the same gestures to shut him up, before going through the door.

Seeing how Riku erased his breathing and slowly crept up the stairs, ShuVi inquired.

"...Riku, is afraid....Because of ShuVi?"

"Ahh, of course there is this reason. But compared to that——"

Riku was going to say it out when he suddenly stopped. To escape or to not escape, he started to cover his head——

"Ri————————————————————————————ku
————————————————————————————!"

At the same time as the shout came.

Directing the attack to Riku's head——no, his abdomen.

Coron who appeared in front of Riku, gave him a malicious knee kick.

Riku who didn't have time to moan collapsed onto the ground, and as if not easily letting him off.

Coron continued by pulling the chest area of Riku's shirt and started scolding.

"YOUUUUU!! Are you satisfied for leaving home for five days and making everyone worried——"

Riku started foaming at his mouth due to Coron's intense shaking and roaring.

——at this time.

Suddenly, the moment Coron stopped her actions,

"WHY IS THIS CHILD SO CUTEEEE————————— "

She tossed Riku aside and hugged ShuVi.

Afterwards, she started laughing and sent her gaze over to Riku who was coughing vigorously.

"Hey Riku, wouldn't it be fine if you've just said you were off to pick up a new bride ♪"

"Coron, is your head okay. Who would try and find a bride in this troubled world for five days——"

Hearing the answer from Riku whose eyes were semi-opened, Coron attacked with her elbow and continued.

"Really now~ don't be shy~~ ♪ In this day and age, the first thing is life, the second is food! Third fourth and fifth are life too yo!"

——then what about you!

Riku almost blurted out the words he was thinking but he swallowed it back.

"But Riku didn't have that meaning, so I was worried oh? I absolutely won't hinder you too, so both of you enjoy your baths and have an intimate relation~ ——"

"....Stop your hand movements first!"

Riku hugged his head upon seeing how Coron placed her thumb and forefinger before inserting the gap with her middle finger.

"Hey, I say...Did you not normally think that she would be a survivor of a destroyed colony?"

——then, as if regaining her rationality, Coron finally stopped.

She suddenly asked with a mysterious look.

"....——is that so?"

Finishing his words, Riku felt that the situation was a bit bad——he has no

choice.

Since he started it already, he was determined and said.

".....After interpreting the Dwarves' map, you should know that there was a battle in the place that needed two and a half days for a horse to travel. There was a small colony near that area——I went there to confirm it."

————not lying.

According to the map, there was a colony that disappeared due to the exchange with the Demonia and the Dwarves.

But that was——a matter [Two years ago].

But in this colony, the only person who knows Dwarven language was Riku——so there won't be any flaws.

But Coron possibly couldn't agree just because of this——

"Even so, there was no need for you alone to go right."

Riku expected that the refute would be this, he shook his head and said.

"There would be more risks if there were more people. But if I tell that I will go alone——"

"Getting prohibited would of course be natural!! This kind of things, although it's very Riku-like....Hey, you should give some consideration to your sister and allow me to give your stomach some new holes right?"

Coron looked at Riku with dependent eyes.

Noticing her red and swollen eyes, Riku's mood became heavier than before.

Riku apologized deep in his heart to her sister that got worried for him——even so, he couldn't tell the truth.

As if giving up, Coron sighed and turned around, gently inquiring ShuVi.

"Sorry bout that——it seems like you encountered alot of misfortune....What's your name?"

"....ShuVi...."

According to plan, according to the setting.

As if extremely timid, ShuVi hid behind Riku and replied.

Unun, Coron nodded her head while smiling and replied.

"But, rest assured, this is safe because there is Riku. So how did you get to know Riku ♪"

Riku thought——there shouldn't be any malice in this question.

It was only a question formed with purely interest. Or maybe, it was to comfort ShuVi who lost her colony, a feeling akin to small doubt——

For ShuVi who did not follow up with the conversation, Riku instructed her with his eyes to [Continue the interaction].

But——as an Ex-Machina, she couldn't interpret this kind of hint.

"....ShuVi..Kissed with Riku....Then strongly requested.....Reproduction behavior."

——okay, here comes the problem.

From this statement, it could be determined that it was [ShuVi who approached Riku for reproduction behavior].

At this time, Coron started marching with unusually heavy footsteps.

"That kind of thing——"

The cave started shaking as Riku got bombarded with punches that could potentially pierce through his heart.

"Can only be done after determining it's safe, after the success then it should be done————————————————————!"

Riku's consciousness was easily erased.

Part 5

——Riku and the young survivor of a destroyed colony, recently met and had already requested sex.

The speed this rumor traveled was even faster than the speed of sound——the whole colony was buzzing around intensely.

"No, Riku is correct. When it can be done, it must be done."

"No, Riku should seek mutual-consent before doing that first."

"No wait, you are saying as if he hasn't gained the other party's consent yet right?"

"Forcing it is similar to commitment right? What else is there to discuss?——"

.....

"Strange."

The debate was strange. Reason being was the fact that no one mentioned about how young ShuVi was.

Everything was strange. Or was it himself who was strange?

Perhaps driven to insanity by this war, it appears that the people in this colony can't take it anymore....

Accepting all looks and words of contempt or respect, Riku went through the colony into his room.

Then, using a barely audible voice, he complained to ShuVi who was strolling beside him.

"I say, can't you give me a break....?"

".....What?"

Not understanding what she did wrong, ShuVi tilted her head in confusion.

"Speaking of which, you want to understand my [Heart] right? Which means you want to seduce me, right?"

He suddenly got reminded of the time when he was called [Nii].

"Can't you have an appearance of someone older?"

If that was the case, this situation wouldn't have happened. Riku was unsatisfied with the results, while ShuVi replied blankly.

"....This is a look....The human males.....Including Riku...like."

"Why don't you just say that I'm a lolicon. I love fascinating——"

"Liar."

Swiftly interrupting his words, ShuVi continued.

"...Then, with the human called Coron, the reason for no reproductive behavior....None."

Aiya—Riku thought.

Because of an Ex-Machina's judgement, he got identified as a lolicon.

And including the matter about Coron citing the evidence out, it confirmed it.

"....Probably, all human males, like, young girl."

"Are you kidding, don't generalize, every individual has their own personal preference——"

"....Deny....Biologically speaking, if you are fertile....Beneficial for a young body, no room for discussions."

——this guy.

The Ex-Machina who wasn't supposed to have emotions, displayed an astonished look to Riku while explaining. It was probably an illusion.

"....Ex-Machina, don't have an ambiguous subject....Humans, like to breed with younger girls....just, facts."

"——...You, are making things difficult...."

Burdened with all kinds of stares directing at his direction, Riku had a disappointed expression as he returned back to his room.

.....Just one day, it made someone feel so distant, this was probably an illusion to Riku too.

Part 6

——this was a really.....really long day.

Risking one's life to search for something, and the result was——

"....This, is....Riku's....Room?"

Giving a strange look towards Riku's room, an Ex-Machina girl whose intentions were unknown.

"Are you scared of it because it's too shabby?"

"....Its very.....Scary."

Even an Ex-Machina can say flattery and ironic words, Riku jokingly exclaimed to himself.

Probably prepared by Coron——Riku reached out for the food placed on the cushioned bed that was on the floor.

Right now, all Riku wanted was to finish his meal and sleep like a log.

"...Doing, what....?"

"Although its not important to Ex-Machina-sama, humans would die if we don't eat oh."

Riku casually said while tiredly eating the food with his fork.

"So, I'll lie down after eating this....You just do something properly, I guess."

"....Un, I understand.....Do, something properly..."

After the girl confirmed Riku's map, measuring tools and others——she suddenly proposed something.

".....Riku, play a game together.....Okay?"

"——why?"

Looking at Riku who stopped moving his fork, ShuVi silently pointed at the bookshelf.

What she pointed to was——the chessboard Riku took away when his home was destroyed.

Using the gloomiest expression he had to look at the board, he replied with disgust.

"I refuse. That time, the fight was forced. All these games, are only used by bored kids to play."

".....?..Why...?"

"Because reality is not as simple as games."

Without rules, there would be no winner.

Alive, or dead. Nothing more. In this world——

"Games are just child's play, we can't waste time unnessecarily, and we don't have the energy to do this."

"....If it, wasn't meaningless, then?"

Unconsciously, ShuVi had already placed the chess pieces on the board and continued.

".....If you beat ShuVi....Then I'll give....The intel Riku wants."

"——what?"

"....Such as the origins of the Great war, the reasons...The factors to end it...And the like..."

On the spot, Riku rejected this suggestion.

"Ha... this is boring."

The reason why the Great war started? The factors to end it?——I don't care.

Endless war. No matter the reason, how can knowing the truth about the Great

war change anything?

Moreover, the factors to end it? If it could be achieved, then it would have been realized long ago.

If those people who destroyed the world can't accomplish it, then as humans, it was definitely impossible.

So——Riku refused. It was useless even if he knew.

Futile hopes, would lead to an even deeper despair.

The Great War would end someday, because there wasn't any proof that stated it won't——so people can't deny the fact that there was [Hope].

But if the proof was given, and if humans were to live in denial with those words ——what's left of the humans would be a deserted, barren, damaged and destroyed world.

It was enough just barely surviving as humans that could be wiped with a blow. So——

"No interest, no reason to be. If it was something I want to know——"

Pointing his fork at ShuVi, Riku squinted his eyes and said.

"It would be means of surviving, nothing more."

——one of the guys who pushed humans to the brink of extinction.

"The Ex-Machinas' knowledge, mathematics, design technology——if I win, you have to give all these to me."

All these strengths would be used for humans. In order to survive, it would be for tomorrow——not for [Today].

"...Un...I, understand..."

ShuVi nodded with an expression of slight regret, Riku continued.

"Then what if I lost ?"

As machines that are full of calculations, there must be something the Ex-Machinas would want.

ShuVi bluntly replied in response to Riku's wry smile and words.

"...[Exchange]...."

ShuVi continued while gazing straight into Riku's black eyes.

"...I want to understand the [Heart]....I need the intelligence....of Riku's understanding of the [Heart].

"You want to understand something that is difficult to express with rights, this must be what you mean right?"

"....Un, so, I request...Difficult to express with words...I require..Effort to have mutual-understanding with ShuVi....."

".....Okay."

Saying this, Riku placed his food aside, and sat in front of the chessboard——and prepared to start the game.

.....He stared at the board. When was the last time he seriously thought about a question, Riku's heart couldn't help but think.

Faced against the computing power the Ex-Machinas possesses and to calculate the best way in a chess game to win?——impossible.

But ShuVi's actions so far, was being clueless about the human heart, leading to these feelings of failure.

This showed that there was the existence that [There were factors that computing can't solve].

Just by looking at the board, winning was impossible.

However, psychological factors and strategies——the effectiveness of these were high.

"——check."

Riku who believed all of these, setted up a simple trap; ShuVi who was easily caught in it was checked.

".....Check."

But ShuVi who discovered the mistake immediately took measures to correct it.

The same trap wouldn't work the second time——it was as if this fact was told to Riku. No, this was a specialty of being a human.

What should he do?——simple. Use a different measure by changing strategies.

The number of psychological guidance, baits or strategies that could be utilized was——[Unlimited].

If you can calculate the unlimited——then try to calculate it, Ex-Machina——!!

Riku didn't remember when his fatigue disappeared, his mood was extremely intense, suddenly——

".....Riku, is laughing..."

"————————————————wh,at?"

Surprised by what ShuVi suddenly uttered out, Riku widened his eyes and gently touched his mouth.

——because he confirmed that his mouth corresponded to the fact, Riku's eyes widened even further.

As if unable to perceive Riku's frozen state, ShuVi continued the chess game.

"...Riku, in games...Isn't isolated...eh..."

————shut up. Don't ask, don't listen, turn a deaf ear——Riku shouted all these out in his mind, but——

"——what, are you saying..."

"........[Heart]....."

——————————————————————————————*ka*.

"...In this world, humans being able to survive..To say it from a biological point of view...Is unusual.."

——————————————————————————————.....
....*Cha*.

"....That reason....I want to know....Riku's [Heart]..."

"——hahh."

——————————————————————————————somewhere in Riku's body.

——————————————————————————————
——————————————————————————————something, was sounding out.

"Ar, are you kidding me?"

——————————————————broken.

Riku suddenly lost control. When he regained control, he was lifting ShuVi's head up with his fingers using a crushing force.

But to the Ex-Machina, this was nothing to them. ShuVi watched Riku with her crystal-like eyes.

——her crystal-like eyes reflected the figure of Riku.

"....Unless, you, are not aware of your position?"

Until now, Riku finally understood——ah, I see.

Before meeting up with this killing machine, he tangled his chains, hung up the lock, and sealed his countless feelings and memories.

Things such as anger, antipathy, taboo, resentment, disgust, hatred hatred hatred hatred hatred hatred hatred pain, etc——the built-up emotions that were unlimited.

He hung up the [Lock], towards his forcefulness, his chaotic heart, his memories and his feelings.

——finally, because of being overwhelmed, the sound of things breaking came.

A rational questioning——what is this? Ahh, it was one of the guys that want to destroy humanity.

Feelings were also questioned——in the face of this thing, how could one remain calm?

Ahhh yes——haha——how can one calmly think when in this situation.

"Blindly killing us, taking away my everything, continuously repeating such a thing, I thought you would say.....[Hey hey, what kind of mood are humans]? Haha, a human's [Heart], ahhh let me tell you."

"YOU ALL CAN GO TO HELL!!"

——the bones in Riku's hands cried out. At this rate, his finger might shatter.

Somewhere in his mind, someone questioned——what kind of results would one gain from doing this.

However, regardless of rationality of feelings, ——you are all to shut up.

"———HA,HAHAHA,HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"

How can one not laugh in this situation. Because this was the first time rationality and emotions came to a consensus!!

Like this, concerns are not needed. Even if his fingers break, RIku still growled towards ShuVi.

"Because of your reasons, how many people died, do you understand!! HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE KILLED!? HOW MANY PEOPLE——"

Were killed by my hands——

"....So, rry..."

ShuVi softly comforted, in contrast to Riku's shouting.

Could an apology solve this problem——when Riku was about to retort this out, ShuVi started stroking Riku's cheek and said.

"....To let Riku, cry....Then, ShuVi, must've said something horrible, then, speculation..."

——.....Wh,at?

Riku glared at ShuVi who was stroking his cheek, her hands were stained with tears.

"Grasping....Riku's....[Heart].....Want to kill ShuVi...."

ShuVi's next words brought Riku's mind to a blank.

"....ShuVi, was.....removed from the link..."

In the dark, she told Riku that it wasn't necessary to worry about the other Ex-Machinas knowing.

ShuVi opened her chest and pointed to the mechanically complex packaged, light-emitting part——

"....Use that fork, stab here, this way... ShuVi... will die."

Perhaps she was aware that there was some sense of violation with her words, she revised with a dazed expression.

"?....Die.....Not, biological.....Permanently stop————repair, impossible.....Everything destroyed?"

She was overly specific.

Naturally, she continued.

"....ShuVi..Want to be like Riku.....Have the same [Heart].....So.....Ca,n oh....."

ShuVi talked, as if it was natural.

Facing against those black eyes that reflected her own body, the teenager that

possessed a [Heart]———she [Requested].

".....Complying with inner thoughts...To kill off.....ShuVi?"

————————————————haha.....

——this isn't right, Riku.

To want to shirk your responsibility at this time——in the end, how low of a jerk do you want to stoop to.

Talking about the root of this, it was because of this guys that ignited the [Great war].

But the passing of 48 people——Chaden, Anton, Elma, Kerry, Dilo, Sirius, Addo, Daler, Deven, Lucus, Wayne, Eric, Charlie, Tommy, Sindt, Yarn, Za Za, Zelge, Morey, Golovin, Pita, Arthur, Morton, Kimi, Dutton, Cilson, Sandy, Wally, Kay, Sabrile, Rirai, Bo Bo, Cotton, Luke, Samuel, Simon, Wolf, Ben, Yale, Kelvin, Ahmad, Bell, Harrod, Berrod, Mariah, Melissa, Karim....

——and also, Ivan.

They were people told to die,

Regardless of any excuses.

It was none other than——Riku!!

——*peng*.....

Riku loosened his hands and ShuVi sat down on the floor.

Unable to continue looking at ShuVi's crystal-like eyes, Riku turned his body.

".....Time to sleep."

Saying that, he lied down on the bed weaved with straw.

"....Why...Didn't you kill me...?" Came ShuVi's doubtful yet incredible voice.

"————how would I know, I don't understand, asshole!! SO CAN YOU

PLEASE SHUT UP!!"

Why didn't I kill you? There were reasons.

——like how can you compare me with you guys.

——like how the dead can't be revived.

——like how this could solve any problem.

He could list all these rhetorical arguments if he wanted to.

But Riku would feel that this would be disgusting of him to do so.

He does not possess the rights to talk about the dead.

Because, although Riku could tell the words to send someone to their death.

But personally, he didn't kill anyone. He was this much of a coward.

"....I'm sorry...."

Did she do something wrong——perhaps, she might have misunderstood Riku's intentions.

ShuVi's voice seemed apologetic.

Riku was once again struck by a deep feeling of self-loathing.

——can't, cope with it anymore.....I don't understand...Lots of things are happening....

"...Don't leave from my sight. If you want to harm the others in the colony...."

"...Un....I know...."

ShuVi candidly agreed in a relaxed tone, Riku felt the pressure weighing down on him even more.

".....What, do I want to do in the end...."

Although he tried to ask these questions, Riku felt that he himself already knew

the answer.

——he was already broken.

Regardless of the intentions, Riku had one of the Ex-Machinas who pushed humanity to the brink of extinction as a company.

——since he successfully suggested that he had [Friendly relations] with her ——then, he himself wasn't a human anymore right.

Compared to the Ex-Machina who was bothered because she was worried, he himself felt that——he was the one who was more machine.

Currently, he was continuously [Calculating] her.

——using rational thinking, killing her would be best.

——but there were too much uncertain factors. It cannot be believed that she was relieved from the link.

——up till the end, could she be killed. A lie —was there the possibility of being tricked by her?

But, Riku asked himself.

[Thinking till this extent, I should let it go.]

No. Only——he felt something wasn't right. However, he didn't know what was wrong.

If he had to say it——it was everything. Whatever he felt, was wrong.

"You say the human [Heart]?.....That kind of thing, I'm the one who wants to know.....Damn....."

"?.....Riku....?"

Closing his eyes, he seemed to hear ShuVi's uncertain voice.

Fatigued, the sleep demon easily snatched Riku's consciousness and dragged him into the dark....

Part 7

——*bang bang*, the knocking on the door brough awareness to Riku's eyes.

"Riku~♪ I'm so sorry for doing this while you are tired——"

As the sound continued, the door was slightly opened——

"——Ohhhya□ So sorry! Nee-chan is too dense, so please take your time oh~♪"

Immediately afterwards the door was closed, and the sound of her leaving footsteps *pata pata* resounded.

——what happened?

Acknowledging the fact that he needed to know what was going on, Riku made an effort to open his heavy eyelids.

"....."

"....."

Underneath the blanket, Riku and ShuVi gazed into each other's eyes, with ShuVi on his body.

"...Why are you, riding on my body, may I hear an explanation?"

——from the time when he fell asleep, a few hours had passed already——no, the few hours was fine.

They were in a dispute of life and death awhile ago, so what was this guy planning on doing——

"...Riku said, be in....vicinity where Riku can see...But Riku...Closed his eyes...."

So. ShuVi while looking a bit prideful——this may be an illusion Riku was saying ——said.

"...[Vicinity where Riku can see].....Unable to express using words, presumably.....Speculated, [vicinity where one Riku is aware]."

"——oh? And then?"

"....Contact, even sleeping.....Can detect, usage.....Therefore judged as [Aware of]...."

This was her own judgement, she must feel confident.

ShuVi who didn't have a [Heart] had a look as if asking Riku to praise her for studying the abstract intentions of humans.

Riku frowned and replied.

"Do not go out of this room——this is the meaning. You understand?"

".....Don't understand."

ShuVi widely opened her round eyes and muttered out in complaint.

"....Close, eyes...Designated [vicinity where Riku can see]....Unable to change..."

ShuVi tilted her head, insistent on not agreeing. Then, Coron's voice came in.

"Ah, right! Ehh~ Although I feel like I'm interrupting your good stuff~...."

"We didn't do any good stuff.....What do you have?"

"Ah, that? I feel it would be best if both of you were to take a bath! Especially ShuVi, since ShuVi had some bad experiences, this Nee-chan needs to help her clean her body thoroughly~ like such♪"

Hearing this, Riku signaled to ShuVi using his eyes.

——[You must coordinate with her words]

Not knowing if this intention was passed on, ShuVi firmly nodded her head and replied.

"...Riku said..ShuVi's body.....Cannot let other people see."

——as expected, I should've killed this guy off.

Riku was slowly losing his consciousness, the door however was full of Coron's laughter, who then answered

"Ahhhh~Really♪ So you already tamed her eh? ~ If this is my brother, it indeed is at an amazing speed□ "

"Coron....Please. I beg you. Please shut up——"

"Then I'll leave ShuVi-chan to you then~ I already removed everyone from the bathhouse, so this is the best opportunity oh!?"

"——stop your hand movements!"

After Coron stretch her hands in and inserted her right index finger into the hole created by the left hand, she ran away like the wind.

.....

The only ones left was the intensely fatigued Riku and ShuVi who was on his body.

"——its about time you get down from my body right?"

"...Un."

Riku started thinking while facing against ShuVi who left his body in accordance to his instructions.

.....It was useless to say anything anymore.

As a result, everyone would know that he was a lolicon[1] and the fact that he successfully tamed a war refugee.

But——Riku felt, at least it was better than getting discovered for bringing an Ex-Machina back.

"....You, won't you have any problems with ingestion and bathing?"

In order to mask the fact that she was a Ex-Machina, she neede to mimic humans at least——

".....It means, human beings...actions...?"

"————you.....You can understand my intentions at this timing, why is...."

Riku was beginning to suspect if she was doing this on purpose, but he felt that it must have being the difference in thinking as she is an Ex-Machina and he was a human. Un, I should keep the opinions to myself..[2]

".....Ingestion....Not needed. Humanity's precious resources.....No need to waste...."

Is she respecting our situation here? This is.....I really don't understand——I shall keep my opinions to myself.

"But you'll be suspected if you don't eat. At least eat a little. It shouldn't affect your body right?"

".....Un. Simply decompose it...Pointless..."

"I'll give part of my share to you. This way the food situation wouldn't change ——"

Riku didn't allow ShuVi to refuse before continuing.

"Against water——"

"....No, problems....ShuVi, anti-water, anti-fire, anti-dust, anti-bullet, anti-explosion, anti-demons, anti-elemental particles...."

"You really are an unreasonable race. Then just pretend to be bathing——"

"....But....Anti-fouling...No function."

"You even had anti-explosion right? Unless this is a mechanical defect?"

"...If, usage of, elemental particles is available....Cleaning, self-cleaning device...But, Riku, said, not to use...."

ShuVi protested, looking a bit angry.

"Damn, with things like this, just let it be wrong already. Taking advantage of Coron's misunderstanding——"

"....Riku, help....Clean ShuVi..."

Facing ShuVi who was nodding deeply with a determined tone, Riku hugged his head.

"Why should I.....You aren't a kid anymore, just do it yourself ah."

In a logical manner, ShuVi used her finger to point out the problems.

"....Firstly, take advantage of the empty bathhouse... ShuVi alone... With Riku,... don't lose opportunity."

——.

"....Secondly, ShuVi, some parts, cannot clean....Unless self-cleaning device....Never clean before myself."

Then——

"....Thirdly, deduced....No reason....To refuse bathing together with ShuVi. As expected, against a young majestic beauty like——"

"Okay okay, I get it....Let's go."

Riku spurred on his heavy body that was deprived of sleep to stand up.

——Riku understood that it was impossible to win against an Ex-Machina in arguments.

Part 8

Riku dropped the stone which was burnt red into the cauldron filled with water.

The moment it was dropped in, the small bathroom got filled up wth billowing steam. The steam was used to sweat out any impurities in the body, which would then be rinsed off with water. This was how humans showered.

But because ShuVi did not have sweat glands, Riku had to wipe the dust and mud gathered on her body with a rag dipped in warm water.

With the close observation, the finesse and complexity of ShuVi's body awed Riku.

Riku had studied all kinds of Dwarven equipment that utilized elemental particles, yet he couldn't make sense of the machinery parts ShuVi was revealing.

However, because of this——Riku understood that it was one of the more superior parts.

"....Riku.....Machinery, crazy....?"

"Why does someone like you, who is from a high-class Ex-Machina race, keep having the wrong guesses...or is it because your knowledge is all prejudice?"

Riku's voice sounded surprised, ShuVi who looked justified replied.

".....Imanity's, thinking.....Is related to the [Heart]....Unable to predict.....The specific point."

.....

In the silenced room, there was only the sound of dripping water.

Maybe she wanted to break the awkward silence, ShuVi suddenly said.

"....Riku, play...A game?"

"Here in the bathroom? Why?"

".....Because [Bored]....?"

ShuVi asked it in the from of a question as if she didn't understand the meaning, prompting Riku to give a bitter smile before replying.

"Well, I guess we could.....But the use of elemental particles is prohibited, the chessboard——"

As if knowing that he would say these words.

——or maybe ShuVi had this intention from the start,

Taking off the hood, she retrieved a chessboard hidden inside the hat and showed it to Riku.

"...Ha, I get it. But since I'm helping you wash your hair, there can't be any time limits oh."

Sighing, Riku smiled bitterly and picked up the white pawn piece——

——.....

"....Guuu.....I say, could you be more merciful, I'm busy trying to wash your hair."

While washing ShuVi's hair with his left hand, Riku still had think carefully, causing him to sigh.

Contrary to that, ShuVi gave a stare while muttering.

"So,rry...."

"...Why are you (Sorry)."

No, he was aware of it. But Riku felt a bit self-loathing, so he started acting as the fool——

".....After that, a detailed investigation was carried out...."

ShuVi who was unable to understand the subtleties of the [Heart], said self-reflecting words.

"....Unreasonable....For the assailant to question the victim's [Heart]. Cannot, obtain correct data...."

Assailant and victim——Riku felt it was unexpected for these words to come right out of an Ex-Machina.

At the same time, he felt a mysterious sense of disgust at himself to hear that a [Mere Ex-Machinas] could say these kind words. Riku then said in a perfunctory manner.

"Like this...Before this your reaction is slow eh."

"?.....Although, ShuVi....and Humans, are different.....But we have [Central connecting nerves]...."

"It's not that kind of meaning...."

Riku's bitter smile was mixed with a sigh, but ShuVi who still looked the same seriously nodded.

"....Even, so.....ShuVi doesn't, have any ideas...."

"....."

"...ShuVi, really....Wants to understand, Riku's heart....No, lies..."

No——illusion, Riku strongly admitted.

The depressed ShuVi lowered her head and caused uneasy sounds——Riku could only sigh at her.

"Don't mind it.....I was just a tad bit emotional."

Even though it was a strange thing, Riku reflected that he had not yet organised his own emotions.

All the things he had done weren't proper either. Riku was certain about this point.

But on top of this, the grim fact that was right before him, apologized for spreading destruction upon humanity?

It was too unreasonable. But——Riku thought. If there was no apology, then there was nothing more irrational than this.

——in fact, he himself, was becoming abnormal.

The usual Riku would be capable of controlling himself, but unknowingly, he couldn't control himself at that time.

It probably wasn't due to ShuVi's words right. So why——

Looking at Riku who was thinking such a thing, ShuVi blankly asked.

"....Emotions....is not.....Capable of obtaining?"

"Yes. Emotions——for example, you were hit because of anger, but this can't solve anything, right?"

"But, Riku, Wanted...To hit ShuVi..."

".....That was just a figure of speech. No, who knows——to be honest I'm not so sure about it."

The dialogue was once again interrupted. The sound of water dripping and the heat dulled Riku's mind.....

Breaking the silence that continued for a while was ShuVi.

"...Riku, why.....Closed up your [Heart]....Hmm?"

"You... are you really reflecting? THIS KIND OF SMALL PROBLEM RELATING TO ONE'S HEART——"

He shouted at ShuVi——ShuVi used those glass-like red eyes to look back, Riku immediately stopped yelling.

The Ex-Machina that doesn't have a [Heart]——It didn't matter whether she had a [Heart] or not——but she definitely meant no harm.

.....This guy really wanted to understand what a [Heart] truly means eh, Riku confirmed it in his heart.

Compared to the rational, calculative, ruthless——Riku, she was different.

She only took the [Real Riku that has a heart]——as a valuable object of observation.

——*kacha*

——feeling that the [Lock] has been taken down, Riku sighed.

"....By not doing this, it is impossible to survive in this kind of world..."

Closing his eyes, the scenery outside of the cave emerged in his eyes.

——red burning sky, green land covered with black ash, the scene that continued even beyond the horizon.

Without a mask, walking outside the dying world would result in certain death ——or maybe the world was already dead.

"....That, because, ShuVi and the other races....?"

"....I don't know..."

In fact, Riku became clueless about it. No, from the start——

"It doesn't matter who was right and who was wrong.....The actual problem is, Imanity has to seal their [Hearts] in order to continue surviving, or perhaps self-degration is the only way to survive in this world——this is too unreasonable."

"....Unreasonable.....Unreasonable. What is, unreasonable....?"

————what?

Facing ShuVi's quiet muttering of words, Riku couldn't help but want to laugh at her, but.

Ahhhh, indeed——Riku corrected his own ideas. Logically, with a rational observation——there was nothing unreasonable about it.

It was simply just——

"The strong survives, the weak dies. No meaning, no reasons. This was how the

world was constructed...Feeling that it is [Unreasonable] is probably the [Heart]....Although, I'm not very sure."

While washing ShuVi's hair, Riku's heart held the thought of giving up.

ShuVi slowly said.

"....Don't want....Riku, hurt...What, to do....?"

——?

Suddenly, feeling that there was a sense of violation with what she said, Riku asked.

"Why should you care about me? If you only wanted to understand the [Heart], just like yesterday, no hesitation——"

"....I, am....Sorry....."

"Ah~ I really don't want to repeat the old stuff. But what I say isn't wrong. Taking my reasons into account——"

There is none. Was being unable to communicate with others a reason?

So there was no need to worry about Riku, if not, perhaps pursuing the case could lure out his [Truthful words]——

"..............I, don't know."

Riku frowned upon hearing an unclear answer from the Ex-Machina girl for the first time.

"...I, don't know. But, Riku's injury....Want to avoid..."

"Oh~ allowing the other party to remain the same, otherwise you will be unable to obtain accurate data, like so?"

Riku half-jokingly said, with an entirely logical and business-like tone——but.

".....Wrong....Feeling.....There is, unidentified reason.....But..."

Unknowingly, ShuVi looked downwards and said in a trembling voice.

——

He was convinced of the sense of violation. The speculation when Riku first met ShuVi——was indeed correct.

This Ex-Machina girl——ShuVi—was broken. She wasn't normal.

The proclamation before, she said [Injured] without being conscious of it, this was obvious.

——Machinery? A self-proclaimed person who couldn't analyse the [Heart] could get hurt?

"Hey, originally, from the cluster link....you were abandoned, right?"

"....Un."

She even said the reasons and details behind why she was abandoned. A self-referential paradox, a failed theory that caused a fault and so on.

Was she really herself? If she didn't have the blurry [Heart] humans possessed, it was an extremely difficult question to avoid.

She was abandoned——it was natural for it to happen. But——

"In order to return back to the cluster, you want to analyse the [Heart] no matter what. But it is not related to harming me right——"

"?.....No, don't want, to go back...oh?"

——un?

"Ah, if not, then you, heard a command to analyse the [Heart] then?"

"?....It was, interest.....Own judgement...."

"What interest——you, your feelings, unless you say that it isn't the [Heart]?"

Riku who was struggling to understand what she meant said——suddenly, ShuVi froze.

".....?.....?.....I don't know."

"Ah? What?"

".....I, don't know...Riku, positive. But, ShuVi, can't, feel, important factor...Why?"

"Eh, you are asking me?"

Being asked so seriously, Riku's expression twitched, ShuVi continued——

"....Waiting for answer, examples——"

"...Anything is fine, Riku is fine if he is Riku, no interest, no meaning, no relations, rejected to sync, prioritize analyzing, not analyse but comprehend ————<Flaw><Contradiction><Incorrect><Flaw><Contradiction>——"

"Oi, oi. OI OI OI! THERE IS SMOKE COMING FROM YOUR HEAD, OI!?"

Seeing the stunned ShuVi expounding smoke out, Riku couldn't help but be strickened.

——but that was only for a few seconds. Surveying around the area, ShuVi finally looked at Riku and nodded,

"Conclusion. Looks like.....Don't want to go back."

"You really are ambiguous."

"...Basis...Can't be certain....But this may be correct."

"Really ambiguous."

Facing against Riku who had a bitter smile due to the diverging topic that got weirder and weirder, ShuVi suddenly.

"...That, is so.....Checkmate."

——ah

"You.....Talking to me so that I become unable to concentrate eh? One more time."

".....Un."

Looking at the Ex-Machina who was nodding her head, RIku felt a sense of violation and a sense of restlessness.

——that little smile, could an imitation or a calculation replicate it out?——

"....Anyways."

Putting aside the previous topic, Riku said, looking fatigued.

"You....Your hair is too long. I can't finish washing this. A little more and I'm gonna faint from this heat."

"....If, its fine...Cut short the hair...?"

"No, no need to cut it short.....You really are elusive aren't you...."

Muttering, Riku told himself——I understand.

This guy is an Ex-Machina, something that can unintentionally kill off humans.

Similar to other races, trampling on Imanity for too many times.

Vigilance around her cannot be slackened, His rationality shouted. But——why.

A girl who is constantly worried about the length of her hair, Riku didn't see the logic out of this.

Riku couldn't help but laugh softly.

Part 9

How long has it been since ShuVi came into the colony?

Because there wasn't a proper calender, if an approximate estimate was to be made, she had stayed in the colony for [About a year] already.

Time flies, Riku felt. It was a few days, yet it felt like an eternity to him——....

".....I say, exactly how many people are in the Old Deus race?"

Playing a chess game with ShuVi in a narrow bedroom, Riku unhappily raised his face and asked.

"...In theory there is an [Unlimited] number.....The amount of concepts, are proportional....But most of them don't meet....The conditions to live."

Riku had a grim expression in response to ShuVi's uncertain answer.

Riku sighed, having to face the truth that he was losing from just a move, as Riku continued thinking of the next trick, he continued.

"The Old Deus are mainly divided into the [God of War], the [Forest god] and others right?"

Although the things they do are similar, in war they were completely different. Facing the doubt in Riku's heart, ShuVi nodded her head.

".....The former is Artosh.....The Flügel's, creator....The latter is Cainasu...Creator of, the Elves."

But, Riku wasn't listening to ShuVi.

During the dialogue and the chess game, Riku suddenly thought of something in the midst of thinking up tactics to win.

No matter how many times he challenged, no matter how many times the best tactics were used——he had the feeling of being surpassed.

.....In his childhood, he would always see the person who he couldn't win no

matter what, a teenager who had a rebellious smile.

"I say——is there a God of Games?"

——he only thought of this as a possibility. He only realized how absurd it was after saying it out, but Riku seriously answered back.

"....There is. But....There is not confirmation of the [Divine marrow].....Speculation, does not fulfill the conditions for living."

I'd really gotten accustomed to holding a conversation with ShuVi in this year eh, Riku thought to himself while giving a better smile.

The specific situation is unclear, that was the case.

The Old Deus is a form of concept. Since there is the concept for games, naturally the God of Games existed.

But its [Real existence] would have to rely on whether there was any [Divine marrow].

"Simply put....There isn't any for now right——"

Checkmated. Riku stood up, his scores to add another black star.

"I say, I'd already told you, there is no need to use that kind of tone when there is only the two of us."

"...Un...The central unit for processing sound while thinking, seems....To be irreversible...."

"Un, speaking in a way where even humans can listen?"

"....It seems. Unable to return, to original."

What an ambiguous answer, to speak in such an old manner, Riku walked out of the room with ShuVi while carrying a wry look.

——while walking outside the room, the colony was of a different atmosphere compared to a year ago.

Looking at ShuVi who was beside him, Riku admitted. Since she came, there was a substantial increase in the amount of ideas.

She took the initiative to help calculate and design even when no one asked her. With her help, the accuracy of measuring tools and enemy-detection items improved drastically. The performance of Coron's telescope also improved, the efficiency of growing livestock has also made progress.

The necessity of going out for investigations also decreased. There was enough food to even have a [Reserve]——in addition.

"Yo! Riku. I see you're having a leisurely time with your wife in the room again eh."

"Didn't I say she's not my wife you baldy! Just go and spend your lifetime with your telescope already!"

"ShuVi-chan~ Thank you always for playing with the children~"

Obviously, the number of smiles in the colony also increased.

Because if they just stayed in the colony, humans could live without having to face the fear of death.

But looking at this scene, Riku's expression cast a slight shadow.

——I know. This is just a temporary peace, the calm before the storm.

This brief moment of having [Good times], would fade away like dust when the proclaimed Gods unintentionally stepped onto their heads.

Forgetting about this reality and getting immersed in a moment of calmness got be said to be a blessing.

But eventually, this kind of life would disappear. It could be tommorow or perhaps today——or maybe even now.

Was it because the people were given too much hope? Riku frowned when he thought of this. However, what could they do aside from doing this?"

Pretending to not see despair, believing this place to be safe, living until the day the war ends?

Riku considered that he might be able to achieve this——

"Oi, boss! Stop playing around with your wife's crotch, you should come help us repair the leak from this side!"

"——un~, if you want to get pounded then just say it. I'll gladly provide the language of the [Fist] no matter how much of it you want."

Riku rolled up his sleeve and gave a stiff smile before heading to the direction of the sound——leaving behind ShuVi, ShuVi stood rooted to the ground in a daze, waiting motionlessly until Riku came back.

"——Che~vit~chan~♪"

ShuVi wordlessly turned back when she suddenly got hugged. A smiling Coron stood there.

"Alone~ What are you doing? ~Not going with Riku?"

"...Riku, didn't call me....To, follow..."

"Wahaaaa! ShuVi-chan, just forget about that man and marry me!? What kind of stupid husband would leave such a cuuu~tee wife behind right?~, rub rub rub rub——"

"....Riku, isn't....stupid..."

Seeing ShuVi who gently pouted her lips, Coron squinted her eyes and inquired.

"I say ShuVi-chan. As the older sister, when I say these kind of words——"

"....Riku said before....[Just ignore the self-proclaiming sister]...."

"Ahahaha~♪...I'll give that brat a little something later~♪, anyways!"

Cough cough*, stopping the current topic, Coron succinctly asked.

"Which part of Riku is ShuVi-chan attracted to~?"

"....Attracted, to?...."

"Un~, I asked what part of him do you [Like]~, you understand~□ "

——suddenly, ShuVi discovered that she was [Nervous].

She didn't know why. It must have been the side-effect of mimicking human behavior.

But this time, in contrast to Coron's cheerful expression——ShuVi felt that she was being probed.

After some careful thoughts. For her who has yet to finish analyzing the [Heart].

So naturally she had not analysed the emotion known as [Like], she also could not define it——so——

"...I, don't know..."

Therefore, ShuVi decided to give a honest answer.

"...I'm interested,....in feelings...of Riku's....[Heart]...."

The memory of ShuVi's first meeting with Riku flashed past her mind.

At that time, Riku's eyes, and among the things that existed——and what happened, the Ex-Machina should not have the power to think.

Yet the [Cluster determined there were ethical flaws that was dangerous], there was the power of thought that released ShuVi from the link——

"...Oh~, un un~♪ So that's the case~♪"

Not knowing what she meant, Coron happily [Defined] it.

"That is~ which means——love at first sight right?"

——eh?

"Un un♪ Although Riku's face isn't particularly good-looking, he is that kind of character at first glance——"

Facing the wide-eyed ShuVi whose body was stiff, Coron nodded her head and said with a smile.

"If you seen thorough Riku's [Conscience] and fell in love with him——un, then I can safely hand my little brother to you♪"

"....."

Love at first sight——the concepts needed to be analysed increased again, this gave ShuVi a feeling of fatigue.

Charmed, like, love. The analysis for all three of them were incomplete, yet there was a new [Love at first sight]——to fall in love at the first moment, this kind of new information. Unless, she won't be able to understand the [Heart] for the rest of her life——

"——oi, Coron. What kind of dubious thing are you teaching to her again?"

Settling his business, Riku came back and said to Coron.

"Oh, how rude of you, my little brother. You really are a failure!! When did I teach her anything dubious——"

"Teaching her that I'm a lover of big breasts and stuffing two precious foods into her chest....Are you normal?"

"How rude, I'm obviously a normal person oh! This is a child that will become my little sister oh? In order to not let her bore in her sexual life I must——"

"We're leaving. Stupidity is contagious. Don't interact with her any further."

"....Intellectual level, is, something...Contagious,....?"

Faced with staggering new facts, ShuVi's eyes widened. As if urging her, Riku grabbed onto ShuVi's hand.

"Eh? Riku, where are you going?"

"Its about time to teach her how to collect food. I must teach her the method of using animal traps."

——This of course was a lie. After all, if it was an Ex-Machina, beating a Demonia empty-handed would be easy.

Moreover, ShuVi's age——the number of years since she was manufactured, was about 210 years.

He wanted to rely on ShuVi machine power to go to a place that he wanted to personally confirm——this was something he couldn't say out.

"I might be coming home late, but I won't go too far."

——hearing these words, Coron smacked her right hand like a hammer onto her left hand, revealing a meaningful smile.

"Ahhh——is it green rape[3]? "

"Coron, changing your brain might be optimal."

"Oh, but since the sky is like this, shouldn't it be red rape!? In any case, because it's cold, don't catch a cold——"

"Shut up, you are too noisy. Let's go——[ShuVi]."

Riku turned away with an unhappy look.....It appeared that Riku did not notice.

Only ShuVi and Coron noticed. Especially ShuVi——

This was the first time Riku called her using her name.

Her thinking was buried under an unknown error. ShuVi sensed her body temperature was rising.

She attached this memory with the label of [Most important] and carefully kept it. However, she did not know the reason why.

Part 10

After half a day he was finally on the ground. It was surprisingly easy with ShuVi around——Riku thought.

It would take five days to travel on horse, a few months on foot due to the constant hiding, but it took half a day for ShuVi who held Riku.

"....So this is the destroyed city of the Elves..."

This was a place Riku frequented a year ago.

The buildings that were woven with trees had already collapsed. Although the ugly burnt marks remained, the city was slowly getting overshadowed by growing flowers and plants, just like an elegant garden.

With the sky dyed a blood red and the ground getting invaded by the black ash ——even though this world was like death, this place still received protection from the Gods. As expected of the capital built by the creator of elves, the God of forest. Riku sarcastically said.

Those guys were the ones who threw the planet into hell, yet they turned their own homes into an amusement area.

After the two walked together for a while, they finally stopped at their destination.

In the midst of the destruction and burning ruins, there was a building that retained it's shape. Riku asked.

"Is this...the library?"

"....Probably...Compared, to other facilities...and the degree of murder in the city....Here, the damage was minor...."

This meant that during the attack from the Flügels, there was a priority to defend this place.

It might have been a refuge facility, a facility that had research materials——or it was simply a storage facility.

"....I see. It probably is a library."

Unable to find a door, the two of them slipped into the building using the gap from the tree.

What was displayed in front of them was——

The wonderful architectural style was the same even after going inside, it was hard to determine what was the usage of the building from the inside.

They could make out what looked to be a bookshelf among the other items.

However, it was emptied. It appears the books have already been transferred away...But this was enough.

"The knowledge they don't need, might prove to be meaningful for us...."

Saying so, Riku surveyed the area and inspected scraps of paper as well as partially-damaged books.

"...Riku, can read Elven language...?"

sha la sha la Looking at Riku who was browsing through the books, ShuVi asked.

"Dwarven, Elven, Demon, Fairy, Werebeast——what language do you want me to reply in?"

ShuVi stared in amazement in response to Riku's nonchalant answer.

"...Why, so, many...."

"Because you can't survive without understanding. It wouldn't be valuable to retrieve an intel that you couldn't read." With neither hatred nor anger, Riku said that with a focused expression.

——ShuVi knows Riku when he makes this kind of expression, that kind of eyes.

That was the expression Riku makes when he seriously wanted to win against ShuVi in chess.

"Men just get killed meaninglessly. But through words, notes and the like, we are

able to understand the nature of each race, language and their habits. This was the unspoken law that spread up till now."

With black eyes that don't reflect any light, Riku recounted their weakness and how fragile human beings were. Humans could only run so far. But there was something in those pair of eyes that ShuVi desperately wanted to know, as it was something different from words.

——Don't underestimate humans, the [Heart] that recounted this.

"....Ah.....Riku, Riku..."

Hearing ShuVi's voice who was exploring around, Riku lifted his head——

ShuVi was cutting away a heavy stone that was on the ground, and after using brute force to twist off a few thick iron plates, ShuVi turned to the bewildered Riku and calmly said.

"......Underground, installed....With camouflage.....A space..There is basement....Oh?"

Riku's expression stiffened when he saw ShuVi easily lifting up the metal doors over her head that were almost ten times her height.

——.....

After ShuVi confirmed if there was any biological activity, the two of them walked down the stairs. Then——

"...What is, this."

Faced with the incredible scenery displayed under the long ladder, Riku leaked out a surprised voice.

A spacious hall, there were huge pillars erected at the center of the hall.

There were a myriad of red patterns engraved onto the surface of the twisted pillars.

".....One hundred and eighty....Patterns, the God Cainasu's protection

symbols?....No."

ShuVi who instantly grasped the number of pillars tried to analyse the carvings, but this was too much.

"....Comparing with database of the Elves...The carving, procedure....Is completely...Different?..."

"It must either be an attempt to produce something or is a new thing that ShuVi doesn't know. However, up till now, no matter what these guys wanted to do, even setting the planet to explode or something, isn't surprising. But compared to those――"

From the perspective of a human, blowing off the planet and destroying the mainland didn't have that much of a difference.

Riku wiped the dust off the base of the pillar and read the nameplate on it.

"――[Number 0 Void defense·Theoretical first verification test]...ShuVi, do you have any clue?"

"Nothing, in line....With Elven, item....Media, usage of Magic, basically....Nothing, in match."

I see――it was incomprehensible, but Riku's [Intuition] told him.

"No matter what, it won't be good to stay for long. Although I don't know if there is any, check around for any paper left behind and leave."

ShuVi nodded her head and deftly collected the rest of the paper.

Riku noticed a piece of paper among the stack.

"...Even the [Developer]'s name must be written in a code, what exactly is it...."

Looking at the name list filled with secret codes, Riku felt his body to be trembling.

It won't be good to stay for long, although Riku and ShuVi was planning on retreating fast.

"Damn it....Its impossible to move inside this stuff."

When they left the library, or the mysterious institute, they met a [Death Storm].

This was the reaction caused with the black ash and the increased density of the ash, creating a vortex of aquamarine phenomenon.

If encountered, no matter what kind of measures were taken, the ash infused with Elemental bones would penetrate the protective clothing and contaminate the human body.

The two of them could only withdrew back into the deserted place.

"Riku, at this, timing...What do you, do?"

Hiding in a small room at the highest level of the deserted institute, ShuVi asked Riku.

"Nothing we can do. Explore caves, ruins and the like, if there wasn't anything like that, we would dig a hole to survive."

Riku sighed while answering so. The death storm was not something mystifying. Personal experience have shown that the storm would last from a few hours at least to a day at most. He had already experienced hiding in a narrow pit for a day a couple of times already. The problem was——was this place safer than a cave.

"ShuVi seems to be worried, is something wrong? Did you detect any sign of movements?"

"...Blocked, by Elemental bones....Device for distant observation, incapable...Unable, to use..."

"Un..Then this probably means, this place is considered safe in some ways."

Which means——thanks to the [Death Storm], it would be difficult to get detected here.

There was no way to get out, it was also dangerous for ShuVi to be moving at high-speed without any capabilities to detect any enemy.

With that being the case, Riku turned towards ShuVi and asked.

"ShuVi, did you bring the chess set over?"

"....."

To bring the least amount of baggage——ShuVi who was requested of this by Riku thought she would get blamed.

"....I'm, sorry...."

As if wanting to hide her expression, she lowered her head and apologized. Then, she took the chessboard out with a frightened look.

This movement, was as if the Ex-Machinas were afraid of humans. Facing such a situation, Riku couldn't help but smile.

"I won't blame you....Since we have nothing to do before the storm stops, why don't we play a game."

"?....Is it, okay...?"

While looking to be unexpected and yet quite happy, ShuVi set down a pawn.

Staring at the chessboard, Riku started thinking——the records between him and ShuVi for the past year.

——one hundred and eighty losses, zero wins. Don't think about beating ShuVi, even a draw didn't happen.

But the situation where a surprise move forced ShuVi to immerse into deep thought happened several times too.

In other words, she wasn't something who [Absolutely cannot lose].

——a bold and senseless smile emerged from Riku's face, causing ShuVi to ask.

"Riku, why....You can't win, yet...Continue to fight,?"

"Ha? What a strange question, wasn't it you who said that you would give me the intelligence I want if I won?"

"....Liar....Riku couldn't have possibly....Not...Noticed..."

Yes, this was impossible. Riku was something that was imperceptible.

"...I...Gave..All intelligence, Riku..Wanted....Already..."

.....

With the exception of the violent noise of the wind, silence dawned. ShuVi then said.

"...Riku....Very powerful, oh....Very hardworking."

"——comforting words are useless here."

Interestingly, Coron had said these words before, and Riku replied using the same words.

The conversation ended here. Riku thought, but.

"....Comforting?.....Wrong...This is, fact..."

ShuVi retorted, her expression bitter.

Then, as if seeing something rare, Riku widened his eyes.

It was an expression of not knowing what to say, but ShuVi continued.

"...Now, the planetary environment...Is deadly for humans....But to be able to survive, is .....Abnormal."

Those were the words Riku had said when he clutched onto Riku.

Although these words could hurt Riku, even so, ShuVi went on while trembling.

"This anomaly——correction, exploit....Could be achieved, because of Riku's [Heart]....Will."

Next, staring into the black eyes of Riku's that didn't shine, ShuVi concluded.

"——regardless, how did, Riku think——this was all [Objective facts]...."

"Ha? Does that mean, that it is useful for Imanity if Ex-Machina-sama keeps the winning streak against me?"

"....Ex-Machina-sama....How, I don't know...But, I judge. But——"

ShuVi seriously, with red glass-like pupils, gazed at Riku and continued.

"...Riku, you cannot accept, all of these..."

"Of course, what good is it to linger in this kind of world——"

"No...."

ShuVi refuted, interrupting Riku's words and continuing.

"....You yourself, possibly...haven't noticed it..."

Staring into Riku's eyes, ShuVi asserted.

"...Riku, regardless of who...You don't want any of, them to die....You, pray....Regardless of who. Even if, it was the existence that would destroy the humans——even if, I."

"————!!"

Riku's face distorted.

ShuVi was unclear as to why Riku didn't kill her from before.

She was unable to judge Riku's behavior and actions, she still couldn't understand.

But precisely because of this, she could assert.

"....That is the [Heart]..I, speculate...Definition."

"....."

Facing Riku who was silent and lowering his head, ShuVi continued.

"I assert....Riku, very powerful....But, Riku, cannot accept."

Right, and to say why.

"...Because you don't want to accept...Because you cannot, identify yourself...."

_____

_____

In the room where the sound of the wind could be heard, a laugh leaked out. Riku slowly lifted his head, supporting his cheek using his hand.

——using eyes that reflected the image of ShuVi in front of him, Riku slowly said.

"You, I'm really angry ah....For someone full of theories to be this troublesome..."

"I'm, sorry."

"...Don't apologize...This is just a fool being angry at himself...."

Yes, as if spitting out his soul, Riku admitted.

Ahhh, it literally was the meaning of [Open closed].

There was no room for rebuttal, he was having the feeling where he didn't even feel like speaking.

The [Lock] in his heart was forced open, it was pathetic to try and brave through things now.

"Ahh, yes, that is the case. I don't want to get recognized by anyone, someone like me who is like dog shit..."

Continuing to escape from fate....What can that do?

However, in the end, what can I do!?....

Riku leaned onto the wall and looked up at the ceiling. He whispered as if repenting.

"...Oi, so in the end what am I suppose to do, what can I do to forgive myself?"

He kept giving up on winning because he was just someone who couldn't sacrifice his own precious life to save someone else.

To save two persons, one had to be killed, to save four persons, two had to be killed.

Thinking that this was the only way, the form to disguise himself.

——repeatedly doing this kind of thing, how could he be recognized?

Looking at how Riku was shamefully questioning himself, she continued.

"This is what I want to know...Riku's [Heart], how...to answer...?"

"——haha, its precisely because I don't know that I'm asking you...."

Riku lowered his gaze while having a hollow laugh, but ShuVi continued.

"No matter what the answer is....I will...Help...."

"....Why..."

ShuVi blankly answered the question in a natural manner.

"I said once...Before I understand the [Heart]...I will, accompany you..."

——haha....This is, really reliable....

"Having said that..."

pata, moving the pieces on the chessboard, ShuVi announced.

".....Checkmate."

"ShuVi...In here, it should at least be a tie right, for the atmosphere."

".....?....Air conditions....? What's wrong....?" [4]."

With the similar answer as always, Riku looked out the window while revealing a smile.

Not knowing when, the storm had stopped.

Looking downwards from the window, they saw the blooming colorful flowers unaffected by the death storm, as if under protectiong from the [Forest God].

Might as well say, the scene where the petals were dancing in the room was uncomfortable, but——

"....Beautiful...."

Riku looked towards the person who stole his lines.

The Ex-Machina girl that he felt to be more human than him, her eyes were chasing the petals dancing in the air.

The shining pair of crimson clear eyes caught everything in sight.

"——ShuVi."

Facing the girl who slowly looked back, Riku asked a question he dismissed long ago——

"——tell me. Tell me the purpose of this war and how to end it."

Part 12

Riku and ShuVi walked together in the garden of fluttering petals in the ruined city of the Elves.

Although the black ash were blown away by the death storm, it was a matter of time before it got covered up again. Even though they couldn't stroll leisurely and enjoy the situation, Riku had to repeat it again for ShuVi to hear.

"The sole God's throne——..[Star cup]....Eh."

The title of [Sole God] bestowed unto the winner of the war every God's throne and Elemental Gallery.

The device that had the concept of absolute control——[Star cup].

This was the reason and purpose behind the Great war, the implementation method is.....Really——

"Oi, ShuVi. Can you answer one of my question."

——bearing such a doubt, Riku asked.

"That....Unless no one discovered that there was another method?"

"....Other....Me,thod...?"

Seeing ShuVi's widened eyes, Riku sighed in his heart.

——I see, even ShuVi had not discovered that method yet.

No, because it was ShuVi, because she was the strong, so she didn't notice something as simple as this?

"...Hey, ShuVi. Will I be forgiven if I was alone?"

"?.....Riku, isn't....Alone....Oh?"

"No no...I always felt like a fool to brave through things——but."

Riku smiled while wearing the dust mask.

Riku's expression couldn't be seen at all the whole time. But ShuVi could clearly see the sparkling black eyes behind his googles.

"But if I'm with ShuVi, I feel that I can do some interesting things in this world ——"

"....Interesting? I don't know, joke...."

Caressing ShuVi who lowered her head in an apologetic manner, Riku smiled.

"Its because of this that it feels extremely interesting.....ShuVi, is it boring to be with me?"

"No."

ShuVi quickly answered in a serious manner.

"Really? You're not lying? I'm a heartless guy oh, the bored feeling of being with me——"

"If, not interested in Riku....I won't relieve myself of the link.....And stay here."

This time, his words were interrupted by ShuVi who answered seriously.

Riku thought——

How would he accomplish it? The [Heart] inside him that ShuVi was looking for.

However, ShuVi was willing to help regardless of his answer...Maybe.

What should he do——complying to his wishes was not a bad idea.

"....Un, this is....Hmm..."

With eyes watching Riku who was having a deep thought, ShuVi said.

"...I, am....Interested....In this kind....of Riku's eyes..."

"Really? The things I'm thinking now might even be too much for a kid's delusion oh."

"..This is good...No——revision..."

Repeating the thought several of times in her head, she came to a conclusion.

Nodding deeply, ShuVi——successfully defined this feeling.

Not knowing whether it was because she was feeling happy, ShuVi gave a radiant smile that made people forget that she is actually a machine——

"...I guess——this is also....[Like]....?"

——in the end, even Riku didn't quite understand what she meant.

"What an ambiguous way to say it!"

——in the end, how long has it passed since he did this. He couldn't remember.

Riku hugged his stomach, laughed until his tears started streaming out.

Part 13

Then——shortly after. The destined moments finally arrived.

"Riku!! This is bad, the telescope captured 6 Dragonias and several Dwarven fleets heading our direction!!"

Watching Simon who ran down with his face pale, he said towards Coron.

"Their direction of travel are North and East west respectively! If they collide, 9 miles east of the colony would be the battlefield.

——the sound of screams resounding in the colony declared the end of the moment of peace.

Riku instructed for the food and other luggage to be brought out, efficiently directing the works for a full retreat.

Meanwhile, Riku, ShuVi and Coron delineated the effective range of the battlefield.

They found 28 other places from an investigation 5 years ago, and determined the most appropriate location for a shelter.

Completing the preparations to evacuate 8 hours before the fighting began, the began to move, then....

————.....

The colony of almost 2000 people witnessed their homes getting engulfed by light and then disappearing.

The deceased numbered less than 200, who all died while commanding the last evacuating people.

In the case where fighting ensued near the colony, their loss were considerably small in number.

But seeing the colony and rock hill evaporated off, the people on the high

platform started to cry.

——this was natural. Coron who thought of this clenched her trembling fists.

If one lost his home, then rebuild it. Although the logic can be understood.

The telescope they desperately repaired was gone. It couldn't be helped, they had to accept that everything happened precisely because of this moment.

Information, map, measuring items and every other important things were brought out——but.

The important things were not always visible. The effort and sacrifice needed to maintain the colony, the memories of living there, as well as their prayers and desires.

——all of these disappeared in a moment,

And that was because of a stray bullet that held no malice nor meaning to destroy their homes.

Someone who doesn't cry would be abnormal. The person who saw all of this is crazy.

Indeed, their lives were saved. However, what could their lives do after this?

Repeat this experience one more time?

Paying for the miserable memories of tears, sacrifice and biting lips.

And once again, disappear as if it was garbage?

In the moment where Coron couldn't hold it in anymore and was about to start crying, Coron saw the back of the figure of her little brother.

"Riku.....Ri, Riku!!"

Coron ran towards the figure that was hugging his own knees and constantly trembling.

"Riku, hold it in! With so many people alive, Riku had done his best!"

——he was at his limits.

Stop making excuses, Coron warned herself while making up her mind.

I can no longer rely on my little brother, letting him bear all the burden....Later on he——

"Riku, stop it, okay? Just let Nee-chan to take over——"

Right now.

"——ShuVi, recorded it?"

"...No...Problems..."

Riku who cheerfully looked up, his face had a bright and degrading smile.

"——ah, th, that? Ri, Riku..?"

It was a women's sixth sense, seeing the drastic changes that Riku underwent, Coron reflectively wanted to step back.

Won't let you escape! Caught on the wrist by Riku, Coron couldn't help but issue out an [Ah!].

"Ju~st like that oh Coron, from now on the colony's [Elder] is you, so a pleasure to work with you "

"——ha, eh, EH?"

Handing over the map with a his face full of smiles, Riku straightened his back and stood up.

"This is the location of the new colony. Passing through the cave, the other side should be safe. Although it isn't immediately habitable, once it's arranged, it is livable. Because this place was chosen by the things we brought out."

Saying so, Riku exchanged glances with ShuVi who stood at his side.

Then with a cheery smile, they walked away in the opposite direction. Coron who finally had a peace of mind cried out.

"Wa, wait a moment Riku! Without you, I——the colony will——"

No matter what, if Riku——if her little brother isn't present, wanting to replace him is impossible.

Coron cried out, but——

"No, there won't be any problems if Coron is present——because from now on I won't let anyone die."

"...Eh?"

"Well, rest assured. I will properly keep in touch with you. If it's Coron, I can safely hand everyone over to you."

Coron stared blankly as Riku's figure started to fade away.

"——hey, Riku..."

She called his name——but, the person who turned back wasn't [Riku] anymore.

——no, incorrect. I know. This was the Riku she met the last time.

His eyes had a bottomless enthusisam, but yet the boy chose to seal off his heart.

Believing to pry open the [Lock] in his heart, was undoubtedly the young girl beside him.

Coron spat out a big, yet gentle sigh.

Although he already guessed that it would be an unbelievable answer, Coron still asked——

"Hey——what are you planning on doing——?"

Expected answer, no, the answer was more than expected.

The orginal Riku who is naive, bold and full of fiery answered.

"——just a game. A simple——child's play that is about to begin oh!"

References

1. Jump up ↑ What can I say, a guy who loves little girls? I'm sure you guys know
2. Jump up ↑ He switches to first person narrative.
3. Jump up ↑ To participate in rape under the blue sky, specifically outdoor sex
4. Jump up ↑ Atmosphere and Air are similar in Japanese

Chapter 3 --- --- 1+1 = Deathless

In a far away cave, after the land map of the new colony was handed out to Coron.

The ones who simply constructed the hideout, received orders until the very end, and lost their lives----

That is how it's being made to be. The one hundred seventy-nine [ghosts], including Riku and ShuVi, gathered around a round table.

After looking at each of their faces, Riku---- the [Head of the Ghosts] slowly talked.

"The war's end that may come one day---- I'm tired of waiting for this "future that won't come"."

Even though everyone there became stunned, Riku still continued speaking lively.

"While keeping fleeing and surviving in this shit smeared world, you will pray for the war's end?---- To whom?"

He said that, as if throwing out something that he always wanted to say but held back.

"To the destroyers who call themselves God!!? To the heavens or to something else that couldn't stop those guys either!!? Live and survive in this shit-like world until the end of the war---- and then!? What about after that!?"

Moving his hands in an exaggerated manner, Riku roared as if lashing out at his emotions.

"It seems those guys are conflicting all around after the Throne of the Sole God, but those bunch of trash participating in this war, it doesn't matter which one of them end up with the victory! Do you think you can expect the shit after that to be better than the current one!?----- HUH!?"

And in an instant, Riku lowered his voice, and said with a voice that lacked any warmth.

“It's about time we recognize it. In this world---- something like hope---- doesn't exist.”

If it's just noticing then they already had noticed, but their hearts would crumble if they recognized this fact. At his words, the [Ghosts] lowered their heads.

That's why, it was said, while each of them let a painful expression show up in their faces----

“We, have no choice but to “create it”---- with our own hands.”

After hearing Riku's strong declaration, everyone there raised their gazes.

“The method is only one. Certainly, it's a stupid, crazy and insane method, easily considered an absurd.”

That idea made even Riku himself have no choice but to smile bitterly at it.

“We are the [Ghosts] ----We are the ones that don't interest anyone, and the ones that doesn't stay in anyone's attention.”

Riku looked at the girl standing at his side.

“We are the [Ghosts]----but even if we aren't recognized by anyone, we are the ones that walk with the will of relaying a legacy.”

Towards the red eyes, that made him think that even so it was possible.

“That's the proof that we are “still” existing... The proof that the world “still” haven't ended yet.”

Riku once again made his mind, and tightened his face.

“Let's stop pretending to be clever already. We, humans, are fools.”

---- And then he affirmed.

“As such---- let's “fight”.”

---- Fight. Not run, but to fight.

Certainly after Riku said that, one hundred seventy-seven gazes concentrated on him. But Riku laughed weakly.

“That's right, let's fight. All enemies that stand in our way, no matter who it may be, with our power---- in other words, with “foolishness”. Fool everyone; outsmart them, just like a [ghost]. Just like the weak. The kind of method doesn’t matter, do it without shame or pride. Be flattered with cowardice. Be praised with vulgarity. Be honored with inferiority-----!!”

---- And then,

“Be victorious.”

---- That's right, what should be obtained is a single one victory.

“The endlessly stacked and lined up defeat, *shall be cancelled by changing it into a meaningful defeat*, that one victory.”

Riku thought about it too, amidst the silence, the thing that anyone envisioned.

The one Riku said to fight against---- those without identification, the ones that reduced civilization to nothingness.

The ones who can in a single whim, open a hole in a mountain, change the ocean into land, and pulverize the stars.

What enveloped the room, was laughs. While everyone was amazed and letting out laughs, Riku too laughed.

“That’s right, we’ll challenge that---- and win. Before such absurdity, all we can do, is laugh like idiots right?”

Yes that’s true. There’s no way we can stay without laughing right---- That’s exactly why.

“That, is the proof that we are humans. The proof of foolishness. It’s the last fate---- of our existence.”

After saying that, and looking around to the faces of the one hundred and seventy seven peoples, Riku said.

“----[The End of the Great War]---- that’s the single victory we will obtain.”

.....

With only a human body, they will end the eternal great war of the Gods.

Towards Riku’s affirmation, the one hundred seventy-seven peoples---- no, even ShuVi who was at his side looked at him with round eyes.

“Well, the victory condition is~... even if I resume it all and say it, it’s so severe that you all will start spacing out, but...”

But Riku, with a smile like a child who succeed in a prank, accepted---- and remembered.

----When he was a child, he thought that the world was much simpler.

There aren’t any competitions which can’t be won, and hard work will definitely pay off. Everything was possible.

That was the ignorant and foolish thinking of a child that didn’t know anything.

Looking at the world with such pure and unclouded eyes and thinking that, is that wrong-----

“This world... was a really simple [game].”

----I knew it----I wasn't wrong.

“The Gods are just doing whatever they feel like seeking the Throne of Sole God[Star Grail], while enjoying the game with an everything goes rule.”

Riku thought---- the story is simple then, right?

“Then---- here too, we should just create the rules the way we want it.”

While saying that, Riku played with a chess piece on his hand---- and looked at ShuVi.

ShuVi said that she wanted to know the answer that Riku’s [Heart] showed.

Then let’s answer---- After saying that, Riku saw ShuVi nodding.

Laughing fearlessly---- he announced the (answer)<Rules>.

“<Rule 1> No one should be killed.”
---- The reasoning is, if you kill you will be killed. At heart, it’s because I don't want to kill anyone.

“<Rule 2> No one should be allowed to die.”
---- The reasoning is, if you let someone die you will die. At heart, it’s because I don't want to let anyone die.

“<Rule 3> No one must be perceived.”
---- The reasoning is, if you are perceived you will die.

“<Rule 4> No matter the method it’s not illegal.
----At heart, if you're not perceived, no matter what illegal method is used it won't be seen as illegal.

“<Rule 5> No one cares about their rules.”
---- The reasoning is, if you share their stage it will be certain defeat. At heart, it’s because this kill each other thing should just eat shit.

“<Rule 6> Anything that opposes the above, shall be considered a defeat.
---- The reasoning is, rules that aren’t enforced are meaningless.
---- At heart, it’s because there’s no worth to be felt, in a victory that opposes any of those.

And that’s all---- of the doing it the way I want.

At the answer (rules) given by Riku’s [Heart]---- Riku looked once again at the one hundred seventy-seven peoples.

“We are [Ghosts]---- Without killing even a single one person, from any of the races, including the Old Deus. Not even being perceived. Only---- [by inducing the war situation]---- we will end this war.”

An emotional rule, exactly what’s appropriate to be called a “child’s nonsense”.

But at the same time, if it’s to end the war with just a human body, then there’s no other way.

Ending the war with just a human body---- because that by itself is already a “child’s nonsense”.

“It doesn’t even need to be said but, if we fail it will be our annihilation. Guarantees are, well~ absolutely useless. There’s a talking wolf inducing the situation of the war----if just this fact even enters the vision of those guys, certainly everything will be over.”

In short---- Riku summarized.

“The Great War’s end (win), or our downfall (lose). It’s a gamble of all or nothing, without draws or renunciations.”

And then Riku let everyone take a peek at his “true nature”, something that no one in that place ever did.

“The enemy is [God], the embodiment of despair, with a violence that sear through the heaven and earth. The chances of victory are on the far end of one in a one hundred quintillion. Since making everything succeed while acting in converts is our victory condition, then even if we win, it won’t remain in anyone’s memory, nor in any records, neither will it be talked about. We are [Ghosts] and as such, [Ghosts] don’t talk. But you know, if----“

After defining this crazy insane world as a [game] and doing maneuvers to challenge it, with an exceptional smile,

“If, we really accomplish this [game]... If we manage to [win]----”

He let out, as if defining it.

“Don’t you think that, we would be able to proudly die, knowing that we lived cooler than anyone else?”

..... Well then.

“I want only the guys that want to start such a [game]---- to remain in this place.”

After finishing saying everything, Riku closed his eyes and waited for the withdrawers.

He smiled bitterly inside. There aren’t many people---- idiots, which would join such a [game] out there.

The folks that Riku choose---- all of them without exception, are possessors of superior intelligence and skills.

Many times they ended in the verge of death, and those many times they survived---- looking from the dwarves' viewpoint they are worthless garbage. Even while being garbage, they are owners of extraordinary ability---- that's why, Riku smiled bitterly inside.

----Probably, no one will remain right. They aren't insane. If it's about being stupid, then I alone am enough.

If it goes to that then, it can't be helped. At the worst, with ShuVi---- we will show that we'll make it happen with just the two of us.

The chances of victory are on the far end of null, so far that goes beyond the cold horizon of Nirvana.

.....Well, to be honest I haven't thought of many plans that we can do something about it with just the two of us, but…

Even so-----

.....

While thinking that, after counting a few minutes, he opened his eyes.

".....Ahh~ I'll be honest okay?"

Riku said towards everyone there that had an amazed face as if asking until when he would keep his eyes closed.

He said towards the one hundred seventy-seven folks----- in other words, towards the result of zero withdrawers.

"You guys, I thought you were a little cleverer than that, but…"

To that Riku---- the one hundred seventy-seven [ghosts] smiled bitterly, and said.

"Hey hey General, don't come out with a wrong reading from the very start alright, the future will look bleak you know?"

“Riku-san, you said clever humans but---- at this point do you still think that there’s such a thing in this world?”

“Crazy insane? Something more insane than this world, it’s too late for it to exist anywhere.”

“If they are clever then, they would choose death in this world. And the cleverest ones, would choose to not even be born...”

“The ones here---- Are the ones who came and survived until today---- Riku, it’s the ones you chose you know.”

Or something like that, everyone nodded while laughing.

“It’s that thing, the representative of the fools doing his selection, isn’t it.”

Smiling bitterly---- Riku laughed. Right, it’s exactly that.

----Humans are fools.

It’s exactly because they are fools, that they avoid being killed by that foolishness by polishing their knowledge, their wisdom.

The ones what survived until today---- In a world without any worth in living, even so they survived.

The ones who betted all their knowledge, wisdom and skills for that sake-

----The proud fools, if they aren’t the venerable weak, then what would they be?



“Unintentionally being born in this world.”

“Meaninglessly living while sipping mud.”

“But coolly dropping dead, meaningfully---- isn’t it perfect.”

“Is there any greater freedom than that, boss?”

“Until the very end we will act cool and entrust it to you. Our way of life---- take care of it, General.”

Riku hid his face, as if amazed from the bottom of his heart, and murmured.

“...You guys, be it this one or that one, you’re all going insane. So much that it’s reliable---- then.”

As if, spilling happiness from the bottom of his heart---- and then---- he spread the map.

What the humans, in order to survive, have been updating for five years---- no, even before that---- the game board.

While the one hundred seventy-nine [Ghosts] including Riku and ShuVi, looked over the game board knitted with countless corpses-

Riku started talking about a detailed plan-----

“Now---- let’s start the game.”

“----Ashieit [Swear upon the Commands].”

That’s right---- But toward everyone who answered like always, Riku said.

“...That word is now forbidden. We move by swearing upon the rules we agreed on, not by a command.”

Then----right.

“It’s ----- Aschente [Swear upon the Agreement].”

----And thus the secret maneuvers of the ones who didn’t exist, silently started.

Having the hope for the future stolen, despairing even at the despair, and finally getting tired of even that.

Not to wait, but for the sake of finding it out---- the one hundred seventy-nine ghost fleet moved----

■□■□■□■□■

“...Riku, as expected... ShuVi... don’t get... the [heart]...”

The meeting ended, and on the hideout’s entrance while playing card games with Riku, ShuVi spilled that.

ShuVi saw---- Every single person in that place, touched Riku’s [heart], and resonated with it.

Everyone but one---- excluding her own, ShuVi looked downwards.

Only her, not being able to understand that---- it was terribly sadly, she continued.

“...Riku, and the others’... plan, each of them... has less than... 1%... success chance...”

Let alone, the chances of every single one of them succeeding---- thinking logically zero would be the appropriate----

“Hm~ hey, ShuVi.”

As if cutting off ShuVi’s thoughts, Riku said.

“That thing you said just now, probabilities was it? Is it fine with this?”

Riku doesn’t possess the Ex-Machina’s mathematical knowledge. He asked---- judging solely by ShuVi’s actions.

“If you throw a dice the probability of a six coming out is one in six. If you do that twice consecutively the probability of it coming out will turn into one in thirty-six---- I don’t know about percentage, but the calculations are more or less like this right?”

“.....That’s, right..... that’s why----“

ShuVi could affirm that she never once underestimated Riku. But she couldn’t hide her surprise on how easily Riku got the Ex-Machina’s logic, and that’s why, she tried to talk about that success chance----

“Then I’ll tell you something good. That calculation---- is mistaken.”

---- And then, she froze.

“If you throw a dice the probability of a six coming out is one in six. But in this game that calculation is wrong.”

That’s because, Riku said while he cut the deck and smiled bitterly.

“If six come out you win, other than it all the others means losing. In other words---- it’s “one in two”.”

----Illogical. But the probability depends on which view points and conditions the calculations are made, and that’s an important factor.

All or nothing---- if you calculate from Riku’s point of view, that logic can be raised without contradictions.

“.....”

A human made an Ex-Machina, furthermore an [Proofer], confute----- moreover, emotionally.

To the ShuVi whose thoughts froze due to so much shock, Riku continued.

“And then the second mistake. If you throw a dice and six come out in the first time---- then “if you throw it ten thousand times consecutively then it also can come out consecutively”... that’s why those calculations are really, mistaken.”

“.....Wrong...variability, if weaved... on the contrary, if its thrown ten thousand times, distribution error, convergence...”

The probabilities of a six coming out when you throw a dice, isn't restricted to one in six. There's much variability.

But if you increase the number of attempts, the probabilities will converge and the calculation instead will be easy. In other words it'll become just like the planned result----

ShuVi tried to refute like that, but Riku laughed and grinned.

"Weave everything? Even what you can't know, and what you can't imagine too? Then for example----"

----That's right, for example, Riku said-

"Something "that shouldn't exist" (we), sneakily altering it into a dice that won't give anything but a six, or something like that?"

-----You can't weave it. At the very least, not in the "first attempt".

But if you continue you will notice the irregularity, the reason for the error will be found---- after thinking this far ShuVi froze.

Finally----inside ShuVi, Riku's words, the meaning of the plan got through.

The true meaning of, no one must be perceived, it must not be noticed---- and the[Plan].

"...Artificially manipulate, the battle situation...without, drawing attention---- within the range, of "error"...."

The already impossible to predict----going against the "variability that was expected".

Riku nodded towards ShuVi's conclusion----that mathematically, any more calculations about this will be too troublesome.

"This is called cheating. Interesting right?"

----Even so, ShuVi still doesn't understand. You can't talk about this [game] by using the Probability Theory.

She was able to understand that. But, even so, why----

“...Why, can you turn... the lowest... probability... into, the value you, expect?”

After ShuVi looked straight at Riku and asked---- Let’s see, Riku started thinking.

He can answer whatever he wants---- If you don’t believe you can’t do it, or something like that?

By believing, by having hope there’s no need for a basis, or something like that?

----But Riku thought, that the answer ShuVi wanted surely wasn’t that kind of answer.

While looking outside the entrance---- to the world that was becoming a star of death---- Riku answered.

“ShuVi, what are the percentages of... coming out the [result] of humans surviving in this world?”

“.....I got, it.”

After Riku said that with a creepy wry smile, ShuVi recognized. Probability Theory is, just statistics after all.

Before the result of a [miracle], any calculations at all are dismissed. Then paradoxically that is----

“...If you make a...”miracle” happen... something like, Probability Theory, becomes... far-fetched.”

Riku laughed, and nodded at ShuVi’s answer.

“Saying it in your style, we go around as a “singularity of calculation”. Whatever predictions, strategies, calculations... with just a minor manipulation, we mess up with everything, and make it converge to the direction we want.”

Riku thought after saying that. It’s impossible to predict everything, those words turned back to him.

Knowing that---- If that was really possible, wouldn’t exactly that be a [Work of God].

Then, Riku deepened his smile.

“Isn’t it interesting? The work of the guys with a smug face waiting for the return above the heavens, forced to suffer a downfall by the manipulation of mere humans. If everything goes well---- don’t you think that it will be the greatest irony?”

Towards Riku who innocently said that---- towards his crystal clear black eyes… ShuVi finally understood.

----[This] is it. The true identity---- of what she saw the first time she met Riku.

If it’s now, then ShuVi can affirm. This is the [Origin of the Heart]---- the [Soul].

It’s what she (Ex-Machina) illogically held “interest”, and finally “longed” for.

It’s like that because it was necessary to be like that---- Something herself (Ex-Machina) who is just a [Responder] doesn’t have.

It’s because she wanted to be like that that she wished, challenged, struggled, aimed for---- [Ideal]----

“Well, besides... fundamentally, Probability Theory is after all, just desk speculation you know?”

Certainly she was forced to confute. But to even say that it’s speculation, ShuVi felt troubled.

“Then let’s prove it---- <Question>What are the probabilities of me proposing to ShuVi here and now?”

While unable to scoop the intention of the question, ShuVi gave out the approximated numerical value.

“.....? Intention of the question, unclear... approximately... near zero.”

“Look, it missed---- Marry me, ShuVi.”

Towards ShuVi who froze, Riku handed out a small ring, and said.

“In the Probability Theory there’s no zero---- The probabilities of being victorious

in this [game], no one can deny it, isn't that right?"

ShuVi looked up with round eyes, towards Riku who was handing out a small ring, and answered.

"...Unable to, understand... I, refuse."

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Laying down on the cold land, Riku, virgin, eighteen years old, while shedding out tears----

"...*fu, fufu, ufufufufufu*..."

----After having his best marriage proposal bisected in a single cut, he welcomed the end of the world even a single step sooner.

Hey Riku... It's already enough right, the world doesn't matter...

A fool that makes a miss from the beginning, at any case he will just make a miss here and there and lose in the end after all.

I don't care about it anymore be it humans or the world too it should just perish already.

Aah...Coron, I'm already tired... ahaha, haha, ahahaha.

"...Riku, I seek... an explanation..."

"No...I'm sorry I got carried away even though I'm just a virgin... please don't widen the wound----"

Sure, Riku was laughing as if he broke down while laying on the ground, but.

"...Refusal...I want, a... explanation."

ShuVi asked, while being so expressionless that it even looked unnatural.

"...[Marriage]---- A exchange of contracts between humans to turn into a relationship for breeding..."

Then as if pulling out the information from a dictionary---- and an even biased

one at it---- she guessed while using it as a basis.

“...Evaluated, ShuVi’s, usability... want to, turn into possession...?”

“Wroooooong! I simply want ShuVi to always stay by my side!”

“...Why? I’m, at your side...now.”

“It’s not in that meaning you know... I mean like, as a partner for the entire life!”

“...Partner--- one who stands by the side and goes together. Companion. Also---- Spouse...?”

“That’s right! That is it! I meant it as a spouse!”

But towards Riku who was nodding desperately, even then she answered expressionlessly.

“...Spouse... married couple. ShuVi is, an Ex-Machina, can’t, breed.”

“There’s no problem alright!!”

“...Unable to perform... the act of breeding... Riku, will be a virgin... for the entire life...?”

----------,

“There’s no problem alright!!”

“.....There was... a pause, for an instant...”

“Ahh damn it all it doesn’t matter it’s just a little detail!!!”

Riku shouted as if trying to deceive himself, but even so----

ShuVi continued while being so expressionless that it seemed unnatural.

“...That’s crossing over the races...there’s no precedents, of a... married couple.”

“Then we are the first of the world!! We became the pioneers right! Yahoo damn it!”

While creepily shouting desperate, Riku refused to go back due to some mysterious confidence.

The baseless confidence that is---- If he pulled back here he would lose.

But, was she pressured by that momentum---- ShuVi's expression gradually crumbled.

".....That's impossible... since----"

".....ShuVi?"

----That's right, with a troubled, confused, and for some reason----sad expression.

Riku noticed ShuVi saying with a trembling voice, and called her name worried.

Riku doesn't know----that.

----That he just gave the last blow, towards ShuVi's thoughts that gave out a huge amount of errors.

The thoughts rapidly started crumbling. Incorrectness and contradictions and failures increased infinitely. An endless cycle of collapse of theories and contradictions. But the [thought] that overturns that logic kept breaking the classified information altogether.

".....Because---- Riku's----"

When ShuVi opened her mouth----the logic and the reason screamed. Don't say it.

But the errors [contradictions]----what couldn't be recognized as anything but that----screamed. Say it.

For an Ex-Machina, it's a worthless conflict. Will it prioritize the logic, or will it prioritize the error.

But inside the thoughts----the vision of the first time she saw Riku continued returning in a loop.

While the undefined errors associated to that vision----[Fear] and [Guilty],

continued contradicting.

----ShuVi thought, what she herself, couldn't believe more than anything----

".....Because---- the one who... destroyed---- Riku's hometown, was---- ShuVi, you know...?"

----With a trembling voice... She prioritized the error.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----Twelve years ago, the Ex-Machinas, participated in an exceptional large-scale battle.

The opponent was one of the three Draconia crowned with the name of <King>---- Enryuu [True Dragon] Aranreiv and seven dragon followers.
(TL Note: it's written as True Dragon but read as Enryuu, which means Flame Dragon.)

The opposing Ex-Machina side's war potential was starting with Cuvre, a [Composite Cluster] compounded of eight clusters.

Each cluster had, four hundred thirty-seven machines---- totalizing three thousand four hundred ninety-six machines.

From all armaments possessed by the Ex-Machinas, a fourth of them had already been deployed; it was an ultra large-scale battle.

Combat result---- the Ex-Machina's strategic victory. Target and Self's losses are as it follows.

Target----[True Dragon] Aranreiv, along with seven dragon followers, -<<Annihilation>>.

Self----42% of the war potential deployed, equivalent to one thousand four hundred sixty-eight machines lost, factual <<destruction>>.

Mostly of that loss, was due to the [True Dragon] Aranreiv's last attack----

Self Destruction, the last roar at the expense of his life---- it was due to the damage caused by the Far Cry[Fallen Roar].

From the Ex-Machinas that were in combat, in the 0.0007 seconds of activation of the True Dragon's Far Cry, about 2% were vaporized.

Falling behind for 0.018 seconds until they received the information from Zea[Observation Unit], the Proofers took a fast-action.

At the time, there weren't that many Ex-Machinas able of avoiding a True Dragon class's Far Cry.

Also it took 0.4 seconds until the information about the estimated damage calculation recreated by the Zweihen[Examination Unit]got analyzed and transferred to the Bepher[Command Unit].

Estimated Damage – Loss of 9% of the war potential. Strategically, that attack worth of being called "annihilator" meant his defeat.

But one [Proofer], instead of defending against the Far Cry---- proposed to "deflect" it.

"Distorting the directivity of the energy", with the armament Org. 2807, that the Ex-Machinas possessed---- Eensweg□[One-Way Traffic].
(TL Note: In dutch it would be something like "one path", but the kanji means "One-Way Traffic")

It was calculated that, if there were multiples deploying of that armament, the estimated damage would fall to 2%.

The proposal was voted by the Bepher, and the Far Cry had its directivity distorted and was deflected to the other side of the battlefield----

The Ex-Machina's losses---- barely stopped in <<Destruction>>.

The Proofer that made the proposal, was ordered to verify the damage caused by the deflected Far Cry, and from it make the necessary reanalysis and decisions.

Then it descended on the ruins where it was estimated that, even though it was far from the Ground Zero, it was the nest of a beast called human that got destroyed by the attack.
(TL Note: Ground Zero is a term used to mark the point of the most severe damage or destruction, usually from bombs or natural disasters.)

And then----

“.....----------“

The Proofer sensed the look of an offspring of the humans turned to it---- while clenching a tile-patterned board.

The look of the human’s offspring had hostility in it but, on top of that---- he turned the back to it, and went away.

----The Proofer---- For the machine that analyzes and considers phenomena, that action was incomprehensible.

That human’s offspring was in an extreme condition, but it confirmed the [enemy] without confusion or exhaustion.

On top of that, it chose the survival. That was, clearly different from the survival instinct of the beasts.

That’s because in the look it gave the Proofer, there wasn’t any fear, or nothingness, just endless----

It could only perceive “heat”---- a heat so great that it even overcame the True Dragon’s Far Cry.

The Proofer let out an error---- an error called [surprise].

That offspring was confident that it could win---- It’s just that, now it was still impossible.

Assumption. Isn’t that, what the Ex-Machina doesn’t possess---- heart; isn’t that life.

The nature of concluding something without requiring a basis, something that overcomes even the computing was confirmed.

----The Proofer who concluded that---- decided that humans, especially that offspring required a reanalysis.

But---- due to the subsequent analysis a huge amount of errors <Failures> occurred and it was excommunicated---- from the cluster.

Machine Individual Identification Number---- Machine Number Üc (Übercluster) 207, Model Pr (Proofer), Machine 4f57t9.

----Later on, by that offspring himself.

----Was the Machine Unit given the name “ShuVi”.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“.....Even, then... can, Riku, still say...the... same thing...?”

After ShuVi told everything, without being able to look at Riku’s face, she only murmured with a trembling voice while looking down.

---- Error <Wrong> Error <Irregular> Error <Failure> Error <Doubt> Error <Cycle> Error <Inexplicable> Error <Unclear> Error <Loss> ----

What filled ShuVi’s thoughts, was the invariably storm-like chain of errors.

----<Self Question> Why did you talk? Be it logically or illogically it was a profitless action.

----<Logical Answer> Profit---- none. Loss----the loss of becoming enemy with the observation target.

----<Illogical Answer> Profit---- none. Loss----being hated, by, Ri...ku?

----Loss? By being hated? So much that it would go up to the position of principal loss? Error, error, error...

“...ShuVi, you know----“

Hearing Riku’s voice, ShuVi felt her shoulders jumping so much that it surprised even her.

The storm of errors gave a scream with a massive sound---- [Run!].

----Run? Why?

The storm of errors answered with a massive sound---- [Because I’m scared!].

Scared. Fear. Ex-Machina doesn't have such a concept. But that error (thought) couldn't be denied.

Why is it that she's currently with her head lowered? It's because seeing---- Riku's face was----

Unbearably---- "scary"---- Once again while the storm of errors swept away the thoughts----

".....I noticed it. Quite vaguely, though."

At the words she heard the errors quieted down all at once, and converged into a single question.

"...Ho,w..."

"Hm~...it's an embarrassing story but, the first time I remember that something was wrong was----"

Riku said while scratching his head and seeming embarrassed.

"...The first time we met, I wondered why did you knew that I was a virgin."

"----------"

Towards the state of ShuVi that perfectly, and literally froze, Riku smiled bitterly and continued.

"Well there was also others, like how you said [reconfirmation of the heart] to me, also like how you hardcoded and said it as "my heart" while there were other humans surviving in this world, and like how you for starters was even "awaiting" in that place so distant from the colony, and like why the "first" game number was chess---- well, right."

To Riku who was laughing shyly while saying that it was unexpectedly justified, ShuVi could only look with round eyes.

She lost her words. The thoughts that got dyed in errors did nothing but stay idle---- but, a question was let out.

"...Yet,...why,...?"

“Hm~...Why is it I wonder? Hahah, I don’t know.”

In a state that really looked like he himself didn’t know, he continued while laughing.

“...It’s because, on top of factoring all of that, I still fell in love with Shuvi, I think.”

----------.

“...You will, forget, the past…?”

“No. By result alone ShuVi destroyed my hometown... that’s a definite past.”

Through these words, ShuVi felt that she was about to collapse from a [pain] that shouldn’t exist, but----

“Hm~...as expected, I am stupid. Because you see, at the same time, I think this.”

As if hiding his embarrassment, or maybe really snorting. He scratched his head,

“If ShuVi denied the past that she destroyed my hometown---- we wouldn’t had met right.”

“---------.....!!”

She held her breath. Even though it’s a machine that doesn’t even have a respiratory organ.

“Results are results. It can’t be helped even if you twist it. Humans, aren’t that kind of living being.”

After slowly walking over, and after crouching down, Riku’s hand-

“Even if they clench their teeth, regret, cry and shout---- Next time, definitely next time, and that way they keep going forward---- that’s why.”

----Gently enveloped ShuVi’s cheek and raised her face,

“That’s why...ShuVi held interest in me, right?”

Riku waited after saying that with a smile similar to a child.

After seeing her own frightened expression reflected in Riku's eyes, even ShuVi herself got surprised at it.

As if soothing that, Riku continued with a quiet voice.

"I, absolutely won't deny anything of the past."

--------,

"ShuVi's past, the present that you are at my side, and the future that I want you to continue with me from now on too, I love everything about them."

----------,

"The conscience of the sin too. Do it like that or should it have been done like that. Too bad but humans---- no, I am just an idiot. In any case---- I don't have time to be looking anywhere but the now. Hold expectations for tomorrow, and hope for the next time. Even on top of stepping through the past, right."

That's why---- and Riku picked ShuVi's left hand,

"If I'm with ShuVi, even in such a world, it seems like I'll want to live in it."

He slowly passed the ring through the ring finger-----

"If I'm with ShuVi, no matter the hardship, it seems like my heart won't break."

The ring's---- after showing a red gem like ShuVi's eyes----

"If I'm with ShuVi, it seems like I'll never become unable to laugh again."

And then as if troubled somewhere---- he said.

"That's why, you see. If you don't hate me----"

"I don't...hate----!! There's no such, a thing----!"

After ShuVi swung her head as if trying to cut off Riku's words---- then.

After extending his hand, Riku---- wished.

“Ignore all reasoning---- won’t you walk the same path as me. As my wife, that is.”

.....

.....Suddenly, ShuVi noticed.

That at some time, the storm of errors that filled her thoughts stopped.

“.....I, see...”

----Ex-Machina is, a race that corresponds. If it’s necessary it’ll rebuild itself as it is necessary.

Since when, “there was such a function” is unclear but----through the single tear in her cheek, she understood.

The storm of errors. Those logical and contradictive things are, something given a name altogether and treated as such.

Namely----[Feelings].

“...Riku.”

“Un.”

“...Literally...just, as it, looks...I’m unworthy----but.”

“Idiot, I think you’re even too good of a wife for me, you see.”

While Riku smiled bitterly like that.

ShuVi, who still didn’t know how to work with her currently faced [feelings].

Crouched, and with a wet voice----as if squeezing it out, answered.

“...Always, always, forever---- please let me stay, by, your side...”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“...In the end it became like as if I was peeking until the very end didn’t it... damn~ you stupid little brother...”

----Outside the hideout’s entrance, Coron murmured while sighing.

After hearing the position of the hideout, she headed out even a single moment faster and ended up peeking all the way.

----Because it couldn’t be helped! I lost the timing to show myself!

She thought while looking at Riku from the shadows, who was stroking ShuVi’s back since she still haven’t stopped crying.

About the day that Riku, who survived from a destroyed colony, got adopted by the adults of her village.

----------……

“Hello~, hey you! What’s wrong?”

Since Riku didn’t talk with anyone, they thought that maybe if it’s Coron who was about the same age as him, then...

Expectation covered the adults’ faces. It doesn’t matter how or why, it’s a survivor of a destroyed colony, they said.

“Alright~ if you have something you want to say then Onee-chan will hear it ♪ Hurry up try saying it~□ ”

Towards Coron who said that and started tickling him, Riku opened his mouth, and said a single word.”

“...Annoying.”

“Fufun~, at such age, Onee-chan isn’t someone that will be hurt by just something of that level! Come on come on, using bad-mouthing as an excuse won’t work anymore alright~? Did something happen I wonder~?”

Riku talked trickling. The light that came from the south, burned down the

colony, then he put aside his parents that became ash and went east----

“----Didn’t you search for survivors? If the light came from south then why head towards the east?”

Looking aside from the adults that got startled, Riku kept answering indifferently.

----Even if there were survivors it would be impossible to treat them. If they were well enough to walk then they would do the same as him and take distance from there.

----The reason he headed east, was because over there was wilderness... it’s because, the Black Ash wouldn’t pile up there.

----If he went even more to the east there would have a river. If he went until there then he thought he would be able to survive----

Towards that calmness that made you think he wasn’t a child, while the adults lost their words, Coron asked.

“...What did you wanted to do after surviving?”

“...Next time, I’ll win... for that sake, I must survive…”

----“Next time”...he answered next time. And---- he said he would win.

The adults gathered and made an amazed face, but Coron rubbed her cheek at his face and shouted.

“Ahhhhhn~! Damnnn~ This child, I’ll make him my little brotherrrr!!”

Coron had noticed. His eyes when he said that the next time he would win---- Those unfathomable eyes.

That’s why Coron thought in an instant. That he couldn’t do it alone. Let’s stay by his side. At that time she decided that.

So that Riku wouldn’t go in a rampage---- so that he wouldn’t hurry to his death----but, the truth was----

-------.....

“I knew... what was necessary to that child wasn’t an older sister to stop him. It was someone that would walk the same path.”

He, Riku, will go to a distant place. To a place so distant, that I won’t be able to follow----

….Well, but, putting that aside…

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“Until when you will be making ShuVi-chan cry!! This useless husbannnnd!!”

Riku groaned after someone suddenly jumped from the shadows and thrust the fist into his stomach.

----What happened, he thought and raised his face, and Coron said while standing royally before him.

“For the time being, as the older sister---- I’ll have you let me say it, congratulations on your marriage □ .”

----Hmm, please wait for a little while, Riku thought and stood while pressing his stomach.

“Coron---- erm, you see... why do you know, more like, why are you here?”

“Eh? I reached the hideout. And then there was a nice mood---- I didn’t have any choice but to peek right?”

Coron said without any bad will, with a face as if asking if there was any other choice but that.

----This self-proclaimed older sister...until where---- Riku thought while scratching his head,

“Ahh, then, since continuing to hide it from Coron would be that, then----“

“Ah, if it’s that ShuVi-chan isn’t human thing then I already know, or it's another talk besides that?”

.....

----------Huh?

“Wa, wait...huh, since when did you notice...”

“Since the time you brought her to the colony. The sensation from hugging her made it clear that she wasn’t human, really~.”

While Coron was acting like she would rather know why he thought that she didn’t notice.

----Suddenly, ShuVi understood, while remembering back.

----The sensation from that day where she was asked “just what in Riku attracted you”.

What this person... Coron, really wanted to ask was this.

----[With what intentions you approached Riku?]----.

That’s exactly why----there was that mysterious feeling of nervousness.

“...If you knew then, why, you didn’t say anything?”

If Coron noticed in the first meeting that she wasn’t human, then she didn’t understood the meaning of her acting surprised at Riku being a lolicon.

He brought another race to the colony you know---- shouldn’t she be wary, vigilant----

While Riku was amazed, but without hesitation----Coron said with a smiling face like a real older sister.

“Because, it was the girl that Riku chose , right?”

“--------“

“At the start there were circumstances right? Riku, the time he first brought ShuVi-chan, he seemed to be stretching the act so much, that even now it looks like he would break it----That’s why I too, played along with it but...”

----I see. If even after reading our circumstances, she excessively pretended

that she didn’t notice then----it can’t be anything but that.

Moreover that was----she believed Riku, nothing else but that----

“But, well, it was like we suddenly got intimate you see!? I could get suuu~ch a cute little sister you know!? Really~ something like being human or not became completely unrelated alright!! You see ShuVi-chan, humans after marry, they make family and kiss, and this ceremony goes on ever since the ancient past----“

“They don’t! ShuVi too don’t take that seriously get away from her!!”

“Ah, hey Riku! Since you got a family----give her a marriage ceremony ok!?”

“----Coron, I’m grateful to your feelings but, I already, don’t exist anym----“

Though he tried to say that----but after noticing Coron’s serious face, he cut his words.

----Be it Riku, or be it Coron, they don’t have something that can be called family.

They’re...no longer there.

Much less officially, since both Riku and ShuVi, are already considered to be dead----that is...

“I’ll be the ministrant, so stay as an “official married couple”, ok? How about we do a marriage ceremony with just the three of us?”

But unexpectedly, ShuVi answered.

“...I want to do it...”

She let out, while looking up to Riku.

“...I want to become...an official, married couple...”

----------.....

----As if there was such a thing; it was just a simple ceremony.

Exchange words of pledge, write the name of the three in a document, and it's over.

Originally they would gather the people from the colony but----Riku and ShuVi are considered to be dead.

That's why, Coron held it in that place.

"Husband Riku, do you swear to have ShuVi as your wife, to walk together, to support her, love her, and survive with her?"

After hearing Coron's words----he smiled bitterly at how much those words of pledge were similar to the ones of the colony, befitting of this age.

When a marriage ceremony is held within the colony, he had no other choice but to lower his eyes, or so he wanted to complain, but now----

"Aah, I swear."

"Hey Riku! Here you should say Ashieit[Swear upon the Commands]----"

"Sorry, just while ago that was forbidden. That's why---- it's now Aschente [Swear upon the Agreement]."

After hearing those words Coron's cheeks inflated and she let out while mumbling.

"...Seems like while I wasn't around, a lot of things were done, somehow~ I don't like it..."

"Hey~ ministrant. There's too much private talk you know~?"

After glaring at Riku who was booing as if he was an outsider, she coughed once.

This time Coron faced ShuVi, and asked for her words of pledge.

"Wife ShuVi. Do you swear to have Riku as your husband, to walk together, to support him, love him, and survi----"

"...I, swear..."

An instant answer as if to cut her out. Coron dropped her shoulders at the continuous ignoring of the form but---- ShuVi continued.

“...ShuVi’s existence, meaning of, birth... I swear it all... to Riku, who gave me a heart...I definitely won’t let, Riku, die... he’ll survive, until the end...I’ll stay, with him... Aschent [Swear on the Agreement]...”

-------.

I see~ I see~ Coron who turned her gaze to Riku saw something priceless.

Indeed----to think the day would come where she would see that little brother with a red face.

“Then ShuVi continue. Do you swear to be---- husband Riku’s “wonderful bride”?”

“...wonder...ful, bride...?”

So she started getting carried away at the bad direction, while Riku sighed thinking that, ShuVi tilted her heads towards the words with unclear definition, but----

“Don’t make Riku sad. From this child who once lost his smile...don’t steal his smile again...”

Towards Coron who asked with a serious look, ShuVi contemplated.

“...Can you do it?”

-------.

To be honest, I have no confidence. I don’t know what should be done, or if I can do it or not but---- ShuVi answered.

“...I swear...I will...become... a “wonderful bride”.”

...Un. As if relieved she gave a big nod, and then----

“Ah, also, be sure to properly fulfill the essential conditions of a wonderful bride during the night life too ok? Being skilled in the bed is----“

Coron accelerated in the bad direction, but,

“Ahh, Coron. ShuVi, can’t do such things. Look, the races----“

After hearing Riku’s words----she bent her face and reflected.

Since she finally had the trouble of trying to soften the mood, she made a verbal slip----she thought.

But unexpectedly ShuVi raised the hand,

“...If ShuVi, knows, the structure...self construction--------she can create, a[hole].”

“WH----AT!?”

“Oh♪ You did it Riku! Congratulations on graduating from a virgi----“

“...So that's it, Coron... let ShuVi see, Coron’s genitali----“

----------The world is unfair.

Riku though, after his cheek got punched by a fist that made even his brain shake.

“----Wait, why am I being hit!”

“It’s because this is a talk that ends well if you just remain a virgin for the rest of your life!!----Well then.”

While saying that, Coron picked up the stone that she always kept at her waist and said.

“Then, after we carve we three’s names here, you’ll be an official married couple.”

Without Riku even explaining anything, Coron grasped his intention and continued precisely.

“...Since you guys officially doesn’t exist anymore, you can’t remain in a document right? This gem, is something I received from my grandfather. If we make the side with the three’s carved names a decoration then---- right?”

----I got it, that way no one will be able to see it huh.

Riku admired inside his heart, as expected of Coron. I knew it, if it’s Coron---- then I can entrust everyone to her.

That’s because, in the stone---- there was already Coron’s full name engraved into it.

Riku, and ShuVi too, neither of them have surnames. In other words Coron’s real intention was----

“...With this, the two of you are a married couple. And my, official younger brother and little sister.”

With a happy, yet at the same time somehow sad face, she announced that.

Giving a bitter smile---- Riku and ShuVi, picked up the knife with their hands.

They put Coron’s surname, bellow their own names. Somehow they felt like the writing was a little bad but----

After the engraving was done, to Coron whom the stone seemed more dazzling than to anyone else, she put it away dearly.

And then---- with a face looking like a older sister’s, even more so than a real older sister.

“...Hey, Riku, ShuVi.”

I want to stop them, but I can’t do it. She understood it, and with an smile---- that even now seemed to be forced.

“I don’t know what you two---- that everyone is trying to do---- You two aren’t in this world, but.”

Saying that, Coron---- hugged those two, her younger siblings, and said.

“I know---- I have a dear younger brother and cute little sister. That’s why...please.”

“----I, don’t want to lose my family anymore. Don’t be reckless, please...”

----Her face can’t be seen. But towards Coron’s trembling whisper, the two younger siblings nodded.

“Aah. No one will die nor will I let die. At least only this [game]---- I’ll definitely win.”

“...Count on, us...onee,chan...”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----------.....

----After the [ghosts] gathered around the round table, the head of the ghosts, spread the[Board] with his hands.

“We don’t exist.”

“Without killing anyone, without letting anyone die. While using any methods, information, plans, and deceives alone we will induce the situation of the war---- we have rules, so if there’s a victory condition then this is clearly a [game]----“

“Everything will be decided by this map---- by this board alone. Then... let’s decide on the [pieces].”

After receiving the gazes of the ghosts, the head of the ghosts---- took out a white piece.

“This is us.”

----A White, King.

“The weakest piece. The piece that can’t become anything. But it’s the most important piece. It’s the piece that if it’s taken it will be the end.”

He set that on the map---- correction, on the outside of the [board]---- on the border of the table, and continued.

“We are the King. But at the same time---- we are also [ghosts].”

Something that doesn’t exist. Something that mustn’t exist. Therefore it’s something that mustn’t be allowed to be sensed.

“We don’t exist anywhere, but we can exist anywhere. We are the ones that control everything from outside this board.”

And then, he continued while taking out many pieces---- all white pieces,

“We will obtain victory in this game, without taking a single piece. Therefore all races are---- [white].”

Saying that---- he took out a [White Pawn]----

“This is---- the Warbeasts.”

He placed the White Pawn---- on the [board]----in the region of the warbeasts’ habitat.

.....---------

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----Three warbeasts killed their presence, and wandered inside the forest searching for food.

In this world, at this age, securing food isn’t an easy task even if they are warbeasts. For starters there are too few decent animals living. Much less when it’s limited the other races they can “hunt” without attracting risks.

After sharpening the five senses, and following the smell---- they finally found one prey.

----It’s a human. It’s an animal that’s not much delicious but, it will fill the stomach.

They cooperated with a voice that only a warbeast can hear. Even if the opponent is a human they won’t be careless.

Encircle him and attack all at once---- they raised their fangs----

“--------!!?”

----Or so they were about to do, but they all jumped backwards at the same time as if bouncing.

“As expected of the warbeasts. I don’t mind if you’re going to eat me but---- I can guarantee the bad taste ok?”

“...What, are you?”

Towards the something that looked like human who talked to them in the language of the warbeasts, the three warbeasts became cautious and asked.

It’s terribly smelly---- the “something” who had taken in a “massive amount of poison”, and was talking in the language of the warbeasts, answered.

“The Forest of the Gulf in the west that the warbeasts are using as a base... the Dwarfs are trying to turn that place into a experimental detonation site for a bomb you know.”

“----What, are you saying.”

The three warbeasts all at once, observed their opponent by picking from the beats of the heart until the sound of the blood flow with their five senses.

----Body temperature abnormal, number of heartbeats abnormal, but that is due to the poison. The pupils are----

“If you doubt me then, try going to the place in this map. You are an individual with Blood Devastation right? If it’s just the Dwarfs' facilities then, you somehow should be able of infiltrating it and finding out that those guys are doing. I’ll tell you just a hint.”

----Reaction of lie---- none. At the same time that those three reached that conclusion,

That human, said.

“----It’s a weapon of large-scale destruction called Zuibaku[Corpse Bomb]----

able of killing even an Old-Deus.”

“””------!!?”””

Picking up once again, heartbeat reaction, pupils, even the sound of the blood flow in the capillary vessels----lies----there’s none!!?

“Search for it. As in, to where it will be carried away, and destroy things like materials and equipment. Also even by mistake don’t try to destroy the weapon ok? There’s also the possibility of it blowing away everything at that instant. The west of the Russia Continent, all of it.”

And then, that mysterious “something”, said all it wanted, and leisurely started walking away.

---------……

“----ShuVi, is there any reaction?”

“...None...it’s, alright...”

To Riku’s question, ShuVi used an elemental compass----or so she feigned to, and searched for living reactions.

There’s no one, when that confirmation was taken in, the [ghosts] infiltrated the Dwarfs' facilities all at once.

“Rather... to be “dialoguing” with the guys that are doing something like this, please spare me from a second time, General.”

----A [ghost] from the past who had the name Alei would look around, and take a breath and say that.

The steel building that was once a dwarf facility, had traces of giant claws carved on the walls, and its origin wasn’t found.

There were also other traces of giant claws engraved with so much depth that it had length of the height---- but

“If it’s necessary then it will be done again no matter how many times. The only one able of talking flawlessly in the language of the warbeasts is you alone. The

blood serum also worked right.”

“Yeah, perfectly. It was over with only two days of convulsion.”

The [ghosts] smiled bitterly and replied to Riku, who answered that indifferently.

----As if there was such a thing. They did a “few applications” to the force map Ivan left behind, infiltrated the crashed battleship of the dwarfs who blew away the colony, and only did a little “exchange” to the little amount of information communicated.

All that’s left is just to convey the fact to the warbeasts---- that the warbeast’s habitat is a land scheduled to have a experimental detonation.

“But I wonder just how many with [Blood Devastation] sneaked in. After destroying this much are you sure there won’t be any deaths, General?”

“Yeah there won’t be. There are no traces of blood---- as expected of the warbeasts, their intuition is incredible.”

If it’s the warbeasts’ five senses then, even number of people inside the facility from afar, they can find it out with their literally inhuman senses.

----And then it would be fine if they just sent an adequate number of individuals with Blood Devastation to sneak in.

The Dwarfs aren’t idiots. They can’t use magic and they wouldn’t put a bomb able to blow away everything aside.

What would happen if many Warbeasts with Blood Devastation appeared there? Would there be any other choice but to run?

And the Warbeasts aren’t idiots either. What should be prioritized over the fleeing Dwarfs is----

“----It seems that the rumored Zuibaku was carried away huh, General. By the Warbeasts, or by the Dwarfs.”

“It was the Warbeasts. Was there any other guys here capable of leaving “footprints” on the ground and walls made of steel?”

----Surely they forcibly carried it.

But the [Warbeasts' intuition] should understand the most the dangers of that bomb.

Therefore what they can do is---- discard the bomb, and then---- escape.

"That's why I'm saying. This is, a [game]."

If the conditions are met, an specific race is almost powerless against another specific race. That's exactly why the war is still ongoing.

"But the dwarfs won't abandon this place. The time limit is fifteen minutes. Gather information and disappear. [Ghosts] are----"

"Something that doesn't exist anywhere---- Aschente[Swear upon the Agreement]----"

While the ghosts dispersed all at once, and where gathering information, ShuVi asked.

"...Is, this...how "you will form"...the pieces...?"

"I didn't do up to that much. Not yet----it's just that,"

The reason he set the Warbeasts as a pawn---- that is.

It's because if they go too deep in the enemy army, they can even form a queen.

But---- Riku smiled bitterly.

"Even if it's a pawn, it can still take out a bishop... it's just that."

■■■■■

----------.....

Once again, the [Ghosts] gathered around the round table, and the head of the ghosts spread the [board] with his hands.

And then---- he took out a [White Rook]----

“This is----the Elves.”

After saying that he put--- the White Rook on the[board].

At the coordinates---- that had the capital of the Elves.

----------.....

■■■■■■

Capital of the Elves----on a mansion at its outskirts.

The elf who just returned home----the one who was called Nina Clive,
(TL Note: it’s □□□□ - lit. “Kuraiv”, so I left it as Clive.)

“-----!! ...Who is it?”

Instantly noticed the presence of the trespasser, became wary and used searching magic and verification magic.

In the depths of the illuminated darkness, a cloaked figure was sitting in a table as if trying to blend with the darkness.

With the entire body covered in tattered clothes and beast hide, the shadow covered with fur and deep eyes said.

“...Greetings, I allowed myself to intrude.”

Using a fluent Elf language, towards the shadow who started talking, the elf instantly made a attack magic----

But she didn’t fire. Because the second ability deployed at the same time---- the analysis magic, told her.

-----[Unidentifiable – True Identity Unclear]...she must be quite surprised by now, the shadow laughed.

Since he tried to deceive his appearance---- but she didn’t expect that even with magic she wouldn’t be able to find out not even his outline.

Therefore, she didn’t have any other choice but to ask.

“...Who are you, is it alright if I ask that?”

Against something you don’t know its true identity, you mustn’t carelessly lay your hands on it---- the shadow laughed.

“Let’s call me just a [ghost]. Let’s just say that, I’m not your enemy but I’m not you ally either.”

Obviously, the Elf searched for the veracity of the words---- but the [ghost] knows the result.

----[Ghost] is a “lie”, while everything besides that is “true”---- the magic will answer like that.

The [ghost] laughed because it was a fact that he wasn’t her enemy neither her ally.

“----Since you entered someone’s house without permission, I think you must have an appropriate business right?”

But the elf who didn’t understand that meaning asked. Of course I have.

Do you think that a mere human---- would sneak into an elf’s mansion without reason?

“----I thought of doing a simple game you see.”

“...Huh?”

“The chip that will be betted by each side will be [information]...if you win against me I’ll offer information, and if you lose I’ll take it.

While Nina was still cautions, the [ghost] laughed inside his heart thinking that it was fine like that.

The elf called Nina Clive. She’s an excellent and sharp person, also the best caster of the current generation.

----Riku read those thoughts beforehand; that’s exactly why I chose you as the opponent I would make contact with.

“You’re wondering if each other’s information is certain or not, since it won’t be a

bet if the chips don’t have any guarantee, right?”

“----------Yes, that’s right.”

Nina was concerned about the possibility of her thoughts having been read and carefully complied---- That’s obvious.

If a sharp person goes against something with its [true identity unclear], first thing they’ll do will be to consider the worst possibility.

In other words---- they will consider the possibility of it being a race ranked higher than its own.

But it’s because of their good head, that they won’t honestly back off.

A higher ranked race, a lower ranked race, or from the same race, it’s because those three possibilities overlaps.

That’s exactly why, the [ghost] laughed and thought---- This one will definitely join the game.

“Then have one in advance. Let’s prove that the game can be held if it’s information that can’t be ignored regardless of its veracity.”

For example, right, if I say this word----she’ll definitely join the game.

“How about---- “Arka-shi-anse [Void Zero Divine Protection]’s existence is being leaked to the Dwarfs”?”

“---------!!?”

The[ghost] can’t sense it, but surely she once again used magic to search for lies---- but it’s useless.

“...Did you find that satisfactory? There’s no problem with the veracity of the information. Since it’s you, who is the caster of the logic of the Arka-shi-anse, also its formula editor, it’s possible for you to probe it without the veracity---- there will be no difference right?”

The elf created a calm face while thinking in a hurry. The [ghost] knew that as if picking it up with the hand.

----Arka-shi-anse is, a super important secret being concealed even from the logic caster.

Even confidential documents that could lead to the ones involved in its development had been recorded as “encrypted”.

It was recorded in the few documents----which ShuVi found left behind in the subterranean room, in the elf ruins.

In the her eyes who didn’t knew that---- the [ghost] was being reflected as an existence who knew everything.

That’s right, no matter what it may be---- it was as an existence which she can’t carelessly lay her hands on.

“.....----------“

As expected he can’t sense it, but the elf must be doing a lot of searches in the words of the [ghost] right.

But---- it’s useless. There are no lies.

The information is certainly being leaked. But it’s because that “the one who is leaking it is no one but the [ghost] himself”-----

“...Fine. It seems like, I can’t leave without knowing what you are, right.”

After saying that, she seated in front of the [ghost], folded her hands and asked.

“Well then, about the game---- judging from the use of chips, will it be a card game?”

“No, it will be a [fast move chess]---- it’s easy to understand since there won’t be anything wrong for both sides right?”

After saying that, the elf let her gaze fall to the chess board above the table, and said.

“----Fine, then, let’s start.”

“Yeah, but before that...”

And the [ghost] said, with a voice that was as if making fun of her.

“Could you return the piece? The first player is me who is the white you see. My apologies.”

“----------Yeah, I’m sorry. I’m not that well-informed about chess.”

----With that said she clicked her tongue inside her heart at the fact that she was “seen through”, and her expression distorted slightly.

Even after deceiving with her supposedly “full power”----the power of an Octo-Caster, her lies were still seen through.

The elf called Nina will think---- As expected, is it dangerous to test out an opponent whose true identity is unclear?

And then she will return the piece, and at the same time she’ll surely think this----

“Well then my chip will be...the Arka-shi-anse’s logic caster is actually----“

“Not you----I already have that information.”

Try to test him with a bluff---- the elf who was laughing inside, against the following words----

“I also have the information that it was a lie, and I too have the information that you used a magic in that lie to make me believe it.”

----Was seen having the color drained from her face.

“Well, you already finished confirming that lies won’t work against me right. How about we start the game already?”

For the [ghost] who was asking joyfully, she understood that he could pick up the opponent’s heart even without using magic.

What is him, just what is this guy---- it’s because she was making such a face.

At such a appearance, the [ghost]---- Riku smiled bitterly.

----As if he would reveal that.

Riku is human, he can't sense magic---- he couldn't even confirm that the piece was moved.

But the current generation's sharpest elf, and also number one caster, looked at the chess board.

If she outstretched it towards the one with the true identity unclear, what would happen, she could predict---- therefore.

She became unable to move "any of the pieces", nor able to use a magic to make him believe in a lie.

----It's just a bluff. But it won't reflect that way in her eyes---- There's no way it would.

All those bluffs---- if even a single one of them gets read wrong, it's over.

The necessity of pressing it that much, she definitely…can't even imagine it.

There was no choice but to press it to that point; the humans who are called the weakest... she can't even imagine it.

Hence, I'm examining the information carefully like this----

----The [ghost] couldn't sense something like disguising magic, also, he couldn't detect lies either.

But it was a magic that the current generation's number one---- she, who possessed magic considered to be in the legendary level since past times, called [Octo-Caster], wasn't able to break through.

If such a thing is really being used then, either way, there's no method to oppose it.

Grabbing the initiative even in the psychological warfare---- But even so he let her peek at information she can't ignore.

Neither an enemy nor an ally---- For now there's no choice but to believe those words and draw out information.

Just like this [ghost] said, it will be fine if she confirm the veracity on her own---- she thought.

But since she managed to sort her thoughts to that point, now is----

"The information that will be betted will be decided on your own accord. How about, in case of the information being judged as worthless, it's possible to request a change?"

----The concern of drawing out information too much inconvenient.

The elf clicked her tongue, at how Riku was talking as if waiting for her thoughts to follow.

----Why, did Riku choose her as the opponent he would make contact with.

She looked like the editor of Ark-shi-ense, the Elf's weapon for the decisive war, and someone that possessed a huge amount of information.

And also, a very excellent caster, and a sharp person----she was the possessor of excellent "intelligence".

That's why she was chosen----it was "just because of that".

It was safe even though she possesses incredible power, and could just destroy everything if it came down to that---such "intelligence".

Survive from the weakness and foolishness. That itself is the human way of life----such "intelligence".

Doing something like hitting off using intelligence against humans----against the weakest, it's a useless effort.

Therefore----this one, will definitely think like this.

"In other words----in case I request[your true identity]..."

"As a compensation for that, I'll request that you bet information very

inconvenient for you too.”

----That’s right; that is your real objective---- the elf will think like this.

Throw away the optimistic thoughts, and assume that the [enemy] will “reveal all” of your lies.

On top of that, draw out all the information that can be drawn, and then it should be possible to pursue the self-proclaimed [ghost]’s intention, and true identity, by exploring the information obtained---- like that.

“Fine let’s start the game. Neither an enemy nor an ally---- I’ll assume that you have no will to harm me.”

Riku laughed inside with those words----Right, I’ll definitely do that.

It’s because she have an excellent intellect. It’s because she’s strong. It’s because there is pride there.

----That’s exactly why---- she is easily read. She can easily be induced.

And then as expected, showing a smile as if seeing through everything, Riku held up his hand.

“Then---- Announcing in the traditional way of the [ghosts], let’s start the game. Could you recite for me?”

In other words,

“----Aschente[Swear upon the Agreement]...”

----------.....

“...Now then, let’s start with the information you presented----“

“I request the background from the leaking of Arka-shi-anse to the Dwarfs and, if possible the presentation of evidences.”

“That was the chip presented in advance... I will share it without even needing to bet it.”

Saying that, Riku handed out the recording stone on which was recorded the transmission sent from the Dwarfs' crashed battleship.

The information that Riku (the one leaking) is telling can't be betted. That's exactly why---- he turned it into a bait...

"More importantly---- the information that I'm offering is----"

And then---- he let her take a glance of a hook and bait even greater than that.

"Let's bet the reason for why, on top of knowing about Arka-shi-anse, the Dwarfs concluded that there's no problem."

"----------what, was it?"

----Arka-shi-anse was "confirmed to not be a problem".

What it meant, can be only three things.

It was undervalued, there's something to deflect it----or maybe, it can't be----

"----It's exactly that "it can't be"."

That's right, after waiting for the elf called Nina think---- Riku said.

The thoughts are being read----In order to deepen that illusion even more.

That's why---- she complied again.

"...So you say that you're holding it. That information, I mean."

----Returning fire with a bluff, by avoiding the specifics of that "it can't be"---- but Riku laughed.

"I'm holding it. The information of the [weapon], that the Dwarfs concluded to be equivalent or greater than Arka-shi-anse."

----That's right, if it's Riku he will answer.

Towards the answer that was exactly what she considered that "it can't be"

thought to be, she clenched her teeth.

But...again she fell to a childish induction right, or so Riku laughed inside.

Evaluating an absolute weapon as [no problem]---- the possibilities that can be imagined are limited.

But she didn't notice---- the importance of the meaning of mentioning "that information".

If she, who held confidence that there's no way they could have something to deflect it, were to be asked without the presence of specific information then.

-----By method of elimination, that "it can't be" is----the [existence of a weapon greater than that].

She was upset; with the fact that her own thoughts, were being read by some unknown method.

While being the current generation's number one caster, she had a reputation of being a sharp person, yet was being played one-sidedly in intelligence warfare.

That fact wounded her pride---- her ability of thinking calmly was being stolen...

About that, Riku thought----what an odd person.

If it were the absolutely strong ones then, they would be fine if they just killed him without a word in the instant they come across each other.

Regardless if that's possible or not, if it's just a half-assed power that can do nothing but use tricks and measure your enemy then----don't boast about intellect.

If you don't boast about foolishness, about weakness itself then, on the moment that that [half-assed power] gets sealed----

----Trying to hit off against humans with only "intellect", such a thing---- It won't even become a talk.

"The magic system lost due to a Flügel---- after that a new system was created,

and I respect that it's your pride that conceitedly thinks that it overcame the first one by far, but if I win let's talk about details. What is it that you will bet?"

With a sigh towards Riku, who was yet standing in an advantageous position, talking about the information gathered by ShuVi and the [ghosts].

The elf called Nina bit her fingernails and tied her thoughts.

"----Arka-shi-anse's current number of continuous uses possible, and the number of machines capable of loading it, how about this information?"

"It helps that you understand fast. As expected of the Elf's sharpest person."

A weapon that surpass the Arka-shi-anse. That by itself is tremendous information.

So she understood---- that if she wants those details to be revealed, anything besides an appropriate compensation won't be accepted.

----As for how much dangerous of a bet that is, Riku too could imagine, but.

After grabbing and using this much advantage---- he aksed, intentionally shaking her up.

"By the way, if this leakage of information gets found out, may I ask what would happen to you?"

"...An omitted court judgment for top-secret leakage, along with treason, and then execution, I guess."

After answering the obvious question made to steal the concentration in the middle of the game, the elf glared at Riku----

But, Riku thought [wow~] inside his heart, surprised at how that was more than he imagined.

To be honest, it's because that thing about the details of the Arka-shi-anse----he isn't holding anything like that.

The name and developer...that was something the Dwarfs randomly blew out in reaction to the horror called [ultra-scale destruction weapon].

And then----with this one's reaction he was finally able to see the whole picture.

But, the elf even now resolutely----gave appreciated information.

"Even so Arka-shi-anse is what the Elfs---- what I betted all my elements on, the strongest elemental destroyer spell----If you say that those mole scum (Dwarfs) created something that can overcome it then, I'll take that information even at the cost of my life..."

----I see~ is that so. So Arka-shi-anse seems to be this thing called elemental destroyer spell.

While smiling mischievously inside, Riku said.

"Then----shall we start the game?"

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----There were twelve chess matches. The elf had five victories, four loses, three draws.

By result alone it was her victory. The information she demanded----correction.

All the information that Riku wanted to deliver to the Elfs were already delivered----a good part of the information he wished were already obtained.

But the elf----was already supporting her cheek with a hand, and growled while holding her face.

"Making the [essence] of the inactivated Old Deus detonate during their inactivation.....? They are going insane, those Dwarfs..."

Look who's talking----on the other hand, Riku hid his face and couldn't help but think that.

----While continuing to pretend that he knew the true identity of Arka-shi-anse, he matched the information, and reached its principle.

(The one who turned it into a weapon that makes the Phantasma self-destruct is calling someone madman----it's not even funny.)

In this world----no matter whoever it is, they are all going crazy already.

After letting that out inside his heart, he passed through the elf who was holding her head and was about to leave----

“...Wait.”

He was halted.

“----Be it your true identity, or how you gathered this much information, at this point already I won’t even pry into it. Besides, from the current point until the veracity of all this information is confirmed, there’s no choice but to accept it all as just delusions.”

“That is fine. It’s a wise conclusion.”

“But, let me say just one thing.”

With keen eyes----If there wasn’t a “certain reason” for that, even Riku wouldn’t be able to pull out such a face.

While directing a killing intent that was like a well-honed blade towards Riku, the Elf pointed out.

“You, there were times that you intentionally moved in a way that would make you lose----I’ll ask only one more time.”

Depending on the answer, it doesn’t matter what you are, I’ll attack unconditionally while using all killing methods I know of.

Even if by result I end up being the one shot down, I’m prepared for that; that is what her gaze announced.

“----Are you, an enemy? Or are you an ally?”

----But unfortunately.

“I’m neither an enemy nor an ally, it’s the second time I answer this but, let’s see...”

To Riku who was laughing like that while answering, at this point that much of killing intent---- was even less than a breeze.

For those who lived while holding hands with the death, something like killing intent---- was just a cute thing with intent.

“If that was an answer that doesn’t satisfy you then, let’s complement it like this.”

And then, Riku who had been living in such a world---- spoke words from the depths of his [heart].

“As much as it’s possible, I’m wishing so that there won’t be deaths coming from you guys. “

----------.

“...Fine [ghost]-san. You want to ask me, what I plan on doing by accepting that information right.”

Once again, she surely must be using for real her Octo-magic to search for my true intention right.

----No way there’s falsehood in there. That’s because that is Riku’s real heart.

Then even without showing out that intention, even as someone who is neither an enemy nor an ally,

“----I will only understand that you are an existence that doesn’t have any “harmful intentions” towards me. Just as you desired, alright.”

Saying that and smiling bitterly, the elf called Nina---- no...

“----By the way~”

Suddenly the way of talking---- no, even the personality----

“As expected even for the [ghost-san]~...there are things which you don’t know about right~♪”

As if everything changed into a different person, the elf,

“Nina Clive is a false name, my real name is----“

She said, with a soft smile, reminiscent of the warmth of a fireplace.

“Sink Nirvalein---- you see~♪”
(TL Note: it’s □□□ - lit. Shinku, so I left it as Sink, since it sounded more feminine to me.)

And then, *fufu*, she laughed.

“This one, is the true me but~----this acting, were you able to see through it~?

Instantly, as if it was a different person, with a teasingly smile, Nina---- no.

Sink Nirvalein---- but Riku, while still covering his face, smiled bitterly and answered.

“Yeah, I saw trough it.”

“.....”

“Did I call you [Nina]---- even once?”

----Developer, and even the logic caster were described while encrypted in the documents.

Because of such thoroughness, doubting that real name or whatever---- is just obvious.

But, if it’s now that he understood the principles behind the Arka-shi-anse, he can consent honestly.

----This crazy logic, Sink Nirvalein isn’t so idiot that she would announce something like that with her real name.

“Fufu, I’ll be honest~, right now~, I’m really boiling inside you see~”

The elf’s number one caster----Sink, who is aware that she’s a performer, laughed dissatisfied.

In the end----she resented the fact that not even once it was something out of the blue for him, but Riku----

“My bad but acting is the favorite trick of a [ghost] you see... I have confidence in being able to see a compatriot.

----That's right.

"That's exactly why---- I made contact with you."

----Why did he choose Sink, the last reason is this.

Being able to perfectly cover the fact of having made contact with a [ghost], pick up the support of the information, and on top of that----should be able to guide the Elfs in the direction of reapplying it----Sink continued, without turning her gaze to Riku who turned the heels.

"By the way, ghost-san~? Did you hear the rumor~, about Elfs having a sticky-persistently nature?"

"Aah, I heard about it. Something like how a grudge won't be settled even if you spend dozens of generations right."

Slowly, laughing like a flower, Sink declared.

"I'll sincerely take the information~, and the effort of not wanting deaths to come out~...but that aside~"

Sink Nirvalein said, smiling----but glared at Riku's back with eyes like those of a vengeful ghost.

"The ghost-san's true identity----I'll find it out and then locate you~---- and I'll "definitely kill you" you see~. To think from all peoples, you had to play just with me with the back of your hand, I'll make you regret that~----it's because the origin of the rumor of Elfs having a sticky-persistently nature is from~...none other than---- the Nirvalein house you see♪"

----------Hmm.

"I'll honestly recognize that it's the first time I heard that. I'm already regretting that I bought the antipathy of a troublesome opponent, alright."

While Riku was saying that and leaving, Sink kept watching over him the entire time, with a smile mixed with killing intent…

■■■■■

“...Riku----hurry, up! Drink...this...!”

In a small room after getting away from Sink’s mansion---- ShuVi hurried desperately with Riku’s “decontamination”.

Even now the excruciating pain made he feel like almost losing his consciousness along with his life, but Riku shook his head and withstood.

With the sensation of having melted iron being poured into every blood vein, he couldn’t even let out a voice.

No, I wonder if that’s even a sensation or not, Riku smiled bitterly at that thought.

The Elfs who possess the greatest aptitude for magic within all races---- he acted like a [ghost] against their number one caster.

If they met normally, he would be stark naked after being identified with the body elementals, and his true identity would be revealed in one instant.

Then what should be done? It’s simple right.

It’s fine if you just become impossible to be identified.

“...If we don’t, drain, the elemental bones, soon... Riku, you will, die!”

While letting Riku, drink the decontamination fluid that could be called her (Ex-Machina) blood, ShuVi grievously shouted.

----That’s right, it’s fine if you just take in the black ash, and get [Elemental bones contamination] on purpose.

Broken elementals--- the [elemental bones]disturb all elementals, erode, and destroy them from inside-out.

No matter how much of an excellent caster she is, a body that was disturbed with elemental bones contamination, can’t be identified.

Let alone if she has an excellent intellect she won’t even imagine it----such a suicidal act.

“...Riku...you liar! Even though...you said, one hour...it was more than two hours...!”

Riku drank what ShuVi calculated to be the verge of a lethal dose of black ash, and painted his body surface with it.

But that lethal dose---was calculated to be a dose for merely only one hour.

Riku’s body that was affected by more than two hours of [Elemental bones], eroded without mercy, and was being destroyed.

If he don’t hurry up and decontaminate, just like ShuVi said it will lead to death. But.

“It can’t be helped, right...that fellow, was stronger, than I imagined...”

Riku answered as if squeezing out the voice.

He thought that there’s no way there is someone who can play chess better than ShuVi.

But if it’s Sink Nirvalein then, even if she can’t win against ShuVi it seems like they will have a good match.

Smacking a bitter smile he remembered...[lost on purpose] you say?

I’m really grateful---- I’m being extremely overrated.

Even though the necessary information was obtained, everything besides that, I just seriously challenged and lost.

It’s thanks that everything that got through were bluffs. If even a single step was wrong I would be killed instantly right----

“...Riku...! It’s, just a little more...so----! Do your, best...!”

If the decontamination ShuVi is holding don’t succeed----either way surely I won’t last much right.

----At the very least, the skin won’t go back to how it was anymore right.

I already saw the fate of those who continued in direct contact with the Black

Ash, many times.

Being affected by the burns, and those marks---- will never disappear.

After his just how many years I'll live---- in any case, Riku will spend his entire lifetime wrapped up in bandages.

Not only his body surface, but his insides too must be in a similar situation.

A dumbass that would ingest a huge dose of Black Ash from his mouth; as far Riku knows, the first one in the history to do that was a dumbass known as [Riku].

Since his skin became like this, it's certain that his internal organs too will burn and necrotize.

He probably, won't be able to have a proper meal, never again.

Fortunately he didn't take it in by nose. The cardio-respiratory functions must be safe.

----If the [Elemental bones]caused erosion from the blood then that too would be suspectable but----

"...Riku...even though, you said, that, no one will die, no one will be allowed to die...!"

ShuVi struggled desperately with the decontamination, but---- Riku thought.

----That's just how much value it had.

The details of the Elf's Arka-shi-anse, the words Sink let out [number of machines capable of loading it] and it's method of operation was revelated. The Dwarfs' Zuibaku too, after reading the force map Ivan bet his life to obtain---- with this finally, he can cooperate with the [ghosts] that are sneaking around in various places, and achieve the first goal.

The "exclusion of the front from the humanosphere"----made through battlefront induction.

And then, Riku laughed inside---- "the last one hand" will charge into reality---- but.

“Hey, ShuVi...I...just how much, I’ll live, after this?”

Will he make it or not until “the last one hand”, it was a question he wondered about, but.

ShuVi glared at Riku---- with an expression unusually filled with clear “anger”.

“...I won’t let, you die...Riku will...live...until, ShuVi dies...!”

“----I see...hey~, an Ex-Machina’s lifespan...how many years is it?”

“...ShuVi’s, number of years of durability...approximately eight hundred fifty-two years, left...”

Riku laughed, at that answer, even while being assaulted by a pain that felt like his entire body was cracking.

“Haha--- well~ I must put effort into that now, right~...”

Really, I can’t afford to die, at such a place, right...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----------.....

Once again, the [Ghosts] gathered around the round table, and the head of the ghosts spread the [board] with his hands.

In the [board] which mostly of the pieces of the races were already set, dozens of pieces of race were lined up.

And then---- this time he took out a[White Queen]----

“----This is, the Flügel.”

After saying that he put--- the White Queen on the[board].

At the coordinates where Avant-Heim was---- the Phantasma that had the Flügels’ base set at its back.

----Queen. The strongest piece.

The [ghosts]put on question marks at why it was allocated to the Flügels, and not to the Phantasma nor to the Old Deus.

“...Is it because, they are strong?”

But the head of the ghosts smiled bitterly and answered.

“There’s also that but---- it’s because “they don’t grow”.”

No one understood the true meaning but---- suddenly, a [ghost] said towards the board surface that had nothing but white pieces.

“But, with this all pieces are white--- it means that they are ally?”

“That’s right. We---- will win without taking out even a single piece, there are no [enemies].”

“No, but then, against what, we should be victorious, you say?”

After being told that, the head of ghosts fearlessly---- took out the [Black King].

“----If we defeat this guy---- it will be our victory.”

“...Win without taking out even one piece----but will there be a need to kill someone?”

With those words everyone’s gazes concentrated on the head of the ghosts all at once, and he received it.

But, the head of the ghosts chuckled, held up the Black King,

“Noo? The rules are absolute. No one will die. That’s because the [Black King] is----“

And then vigorously----slammed it on top of the [board], and said.

“----Since it is “this guy”.”

The [ghosts] made round eyes---- but only their head;

Laughed with confidence.

Chapter 4 --- --- 1÷2=Companionless

---- The secret maneuvers of the [ghosts] who spread to various places in the world continued for near one year.

Today too Riku observed the strategy map (game board) in the hideout, while playing chess with ShuVi...

□As expected□, the Elfs allied with the Fairies. They also made many contracts with Draconias able of opposing the Dwarfs' aviation fleet, and now the common enemy of the dwarves, the [Elf Alliance] became a solid force.

On the other side the Dwarfs, adding up the Gigantis who they had a good relationship with, they allied with many Phantasmas. As a result of the wind (ghosts) leaking out that the Elfs created a "Phantasma Slayer", a really firm [Dwarf Alliance] has been established.

But~ what will be troubling if it's forgotten is the greatest force, on the neighbor continent, the Artosh Camp who owns the Flügels.

Though those two alliances keep hiding their sure-kill weapons from each other, this [coalition] clenched their fists and shook hands against the most alarming enemy, but since they can't carelessly lay their hands on the strongest God Artosh, the situation of the war headed to a stalemate.

The Demonia moved by selecting individual targets, the Warbeasts got cautious of the Zuibaku and immigrated to the west archipelago.

The world was in a critical situation, cautious of the Armageddon (last war), and became unable to do anything but glare at each other----!!!

----And, those are the speculations about the board's status, raised together by the idiots(strong ones).

The Russia continent is comically, in its first "stay on watch" group state, until then only used by the humans.

The preparations are the bests, the workmanship is steady, the once-in-a-lifetime's greatest battle---- what's left is only the last hand.

---------.....

"Hey ShuVi, I asked you before, if there wasn't a God of Games right?"

"...un..."

"You answered that if you fulfill the "activation condition" it'll become an Old Deus... by activation condition you meant?"

"...[Essence] acquisition.... the strength of, feelings, prayers.....exact definition, impossible...flow...?"

When I asked before, the answer was that, it didn't exist because there was no [essence], but----

"The truth is, I □saw the God of Games before□---- if I said that would you believe it?"

"...If Riku, believe it then... ShuVi, believe..."

While moving a piece with a serious face, ShuVi continued.

"...Riku, overturned... all of ShuVi's, estimations... if Riku says that, there is, then □there is□.. if Riku says that, the sky, isn't red, then it isn't red... I won't, doubt anymore..."

---------.

---------Aaahhhhhhhhh damnit!

"Uwah~ This line right now if I let someone hear it I can boast about how I'm falling for my wife so cuuuuuuuute!!"

"...That's...that, aside..."

Her face being slightly red isn't just imagination. ShuVi said while faltering.

"...Check-mate."

"----Hey~ God of Games...can't you let me win at least once..."

Towards the Riku who held his head with a bitter smile, ShuVi laughed a little.

"Eerm, excuse-me when you're in the middle of a talk that makes the ones listening embarrassed instead, but can onee-chan disturb?"

----And towards Corona who suddenly appeared, Riku,

"Oh, you came at the right moment Coron, hey, hey the talk just now----"

"Yes yes, thanks for the treat. More importantly, the one that called me was Riku right...can I report?"

Coron is reporting the current village---- no, the "humans" situation while flipping through documents.

"It's unbelievable but---- just like Riku said, the reports about the Dwarfs being spotted disappeared."

Coron, who doesn't know of the reason, frowned her brows towards Riku who laughed [right], and continued.

"...And so, after searching the northern part of Russia with signal fire and scouts we found a huge number of villages. But if we try to merge with it the total number would be near eight thousand people, the current village can't accommodate----"

"Don't worry Coron. In just a little more, the world will become a place where you can live anywhere without having to fear death."

"....."

Riku answered that while concentrating on the chess with ShuVi, and Coron's fists started to tremble.

"Everything is going well. If I and ShuVi play the last hand----it's our victory."

"....Hey, enough with the jokes Riku.... do you understand your own situation.....?"

Coron was trembling without letting the anger show in her behavior---- but when faced with Riku's figure, she reached her limit.

"You are in a state that it is hard to believe that you're even alive!! If you go out with that body, you will die!!?"

Coron was yelling with tears floating, but Riku smiled bitterly and answered.

"I won't die. I must live for another eight hundred and fifty-one years."

"----Hey Riku please, stop screwing around, think seriously about your own body----!"

Towards Coron's voice that was like an appeal, Riku felt that he had no choice and once again examined the state of his body.

First----the entire body was bandaged.

As expected, the burns in the skin from the elemental bones haven't healed, the skin of the entire body was contaminated, but that's all.

Next is the internal organs' check.... a necrosis was barely avoided thanks to ShuVi ----- no problem in particular.

Ever since then a proper meal-like food is impossible but, at least something like soup is drinkable.

Really, did a few elemental bones reach the blood? Some bones and respiratory organs were done in a little, but it's a minor injury.

"What's left is.... one arm was lost and there's sight loss------- wait, blindness in one eye huh. Well no big deal."

"-----It's a really big deal!! You-----!"

"The other [ghosts]too, are in a similar state, or even worse than this."

Coron tried to refute, but was cut off by Riku's cold like voice.

"...No one having died up to now is a miracle, but, everyone is already with a fully-wounded body. "

A full-wounded body. Literally, just as it means, a body full of wounds.

Overall, from the one hundred seventh-nine names of the ghost fleet, certainly, no one has died yet.

-------yet. Merely, yet.

Injection of poison, contamination through elemental bones, loss of limbs ------ for the sake of deceiving the Dwarfs the [ghosts] played any hand.

For the sake of a mere induction they would throw away the left arm, for the sake of deceiving the Demonia there would be some who would eat carrions, and even ones who induced by getting bitted by a Dhampir---- They used everything that was usable.

-----Everything "besides the life"----- that's why, Riku said as if supplicating.

"Only one hand left Coron. Overlook it----- And then the Great War will end. When that happens I-----"

----- I'll finally be able to forgive myself---- as if trying to say that, but he swallowed it.

"Then at least, tell me....."

Coron hid her face and her shoulders started trembling.

"Inducing the Dwarfs---- even the Old Deus and removing them from the Russia continent, even now I can't believe it. I think it's really incredible---- but end the Great War? No matter how much, I can't believe it!!"

"....."

"If you say to overlook it then tell me!! Or is it that me---- a sibling is that much untrustworthy!!?"

-------.....

While Riku and ShuVi exchanged looks, tears fell into the floor from Coron's down casted face.

".....Coron, if I didn't trust you----- if it wasn't you, I wouldn't entrust everyone."

"Then-----!!"



"What is it that the Gods are seeking and fight for----- you know right?"

After reacting a moment too late to Riku who suddenly began talking, Coron answered.

"....The Throne of the Sole God, right. If I'm not wrong...."

"That's right. That Throne of the Sole God---- being more specific it seems to be this [Star Grail] thing."

Talking about what he heard from ShuVi in the Elfs' ruins, Riku stood up.

"Old Deus---- are born from stars."

---- By wishing, being prayed to they obtain [essence] and then are born---- ShuVi said that.

"But they were born too much. The [Star Grail] is something for the Old Deus, the Gods---- in other words, it's a [control device] set for the sake of limiting the existences able to use magic of the level of creating races to a single one."

"....."

"But one Old Deus creating a [device] able to seize the power of all Old Deus, something like that is impossible ---- right?"

"-----That's, right, isn't it. Because would be----"

With the information heard just now, but after understanding it in a instant, Coron simply----said.

"------ With the power of [ten], create power superior to [eleven].... right?"

"As expected of Coron, it's□ super□ correct. That's right; it's a talk so stupid that you can only be amazed."

It's an obvious story right---- The Sole God in other words is the power to rule everything including the Old Deus.

Even if the ten Old Deus poured their powers and put it together, what was poured down by the ten of them would be only ten's worth of power.

But the [Star Grail] is---- it's about creating a power able to rule the power of the ten poured together, it's that kind of talk.

Fundamentally, their power is not enough. It's impossible.

"That's why-----it's fine if we just do this."

With eyes as if talking about something worthless from the depths of his heart, Riku said, as if throwing out.

"----- If there are ten Gods, if I kill off nine of them then I would be the Sole God---- right?"

That's right, if you sum up what ShuVi said that day, that's it.

Destroy the [essence] of the other Old Deus, and take in the power of that existence.

By doing that I can dope my own power----- and obtain enough power to materialize the [Star Grail].

But, in the end, Old Deus is something that, gets born as much as you wish for it.

Even if the last one standing kills everyone, he will be troubled if a new one is born and exceed himself.

That's why if it rules with the Throne of Sole God-----[Star Grail]then it will be the doing of the "Sole God".

"This, is the true identity of this worthless [Great War]."

..... .

"How...stupid!---- you mean that with such a reason, they're making this war---!!?"

With her shoulders trembling with anger, Coron yelled as if throwing up while looking to the side.

"Coron.... watch your words. It's rude towards the idiots. Because you see-----" (TL note: It's a pun with the word baka (which means both idiot and stupid): Coron calls them "baka" and Riku says that it's rude towards the "bakas")

While saying that as if wanting to heal the mood, Riku touched the map----- game board. And then he announced with an amazed face.

"Because even if we don't do that we can make the [Star Grail] materialize."

"--------eh?"

Looking away from the Coron who was making a blank face, Riku played with the [Black King] with the palm of the hand.

"Hey Coron, have I told you what are the Old Deus born from?"

"-----Stars, right?"

"That's right, the Elemental Circuit. The source of all things. The power flow of all creation. In other words, born from the stars."

As if supplementing Riku's words, ShuVi continued.

"...The creatures.... races too.... the Old Deus's [essence]..... pass through the elemental circuit, and, are created."

"That's right..... in other words, you see?"

With one sigh, Riku remembered the day he thought about it----- the day he heard about it in the Elfs' ruins.

After hearing the talk about the main cause of the war between the gods and the [Star Grail], something had floated straight in his mind.

It was so obvious, that its a wonder why no one noticed.

He said the conclusion that was so obvious, that at the time it surprised even ShuVi.

"Compared to all the Old Deus in this star---- its origin "the star itself" has more [power] right, thinking normally."

That's why----- he announced to Coron, whose eyes were peeling off------.

Riku picked up the [Black King], and headed towards the map---- the game board.

And set it right in the center. Our, the [ghosts]'s---- victory condition.

Namely---- [The last hand], was clearly announced.

"------If the star (game board) is destroyed, the [Star Grail] will materialize."

-------.....

Looking away from the amazed Coron, Riku and ShuVi pointed towards the floor, and continued.

"The core of this star---- if the Elemental Circuit's Power Flow Source is pierced, the expelled power will overcome the power of all Old Deus."

".....Manifestation, is, 10^-46 square seconds.... destruction, power expel, manifestation, will be immediate....."

"If----- the [Star Grail]is obtained and the star is immediately recreated....."

Riku and ShuVi aligned, and announced together, to Coron who was still dumbfounded.

""".....Check-mate.""

"B-----but, that's----- a power great enough to pierce the star, from where it'll----"

Finally, after rising up from her stupor, and after saying that.

Coron finally noticed, once it entered her vision----- the force map hung up on the wall.

It can't be. It can't be, it can't be, it can't be!!

"Make them do it themselves!? Not a stalemate---- the objective was a complete collision of the full forces!?"

Towards Coron's screaming, Riku joyfully, showed an incredible smile.

"About Artosh Camp and the [coalition] you see---- those guys won't do a stalemate."

"------eh?"

Each other's certainly destruction----- The stalemate situation is based on their certainty that if one side laid their hands on the other then both sides will be destroyed.

Something like that, can only work if from the start there was the option of not laying their hands.

"The objective is the [Star Grail]-----but those guys who are there just for the killing, will definitely ignite the spark sometime soon."

----That will be, a manifestation of war never seen before, born from the eternally great war-----

---- It means the Armageddon[Decisive Battle]---- towards the Coron who became pale from just imagining it, Riku said.

"But that firepower---- won't head towards anyone."

Once again, Coron became amazed.

"In the [Decisive Battle's Stage] we prepared, the Eensweg that will be set by me and ShuVi----- is a setting that will distort the directivity of every power and make all the power head "straight bellow"---- that's right, like the lens of a telescope."

----- What the [ghosts] risked everything besides the life to gather, was the information about the weapons that are going to be used in that place.

Going by ShuVi who analyzed and planned everything, the exactly amount of Eenswegs necessary is------ thirty-two.

"Those guys will pierce the star by themselves, will destroy the elemental circuit, the materialized [Star Grail] will be taken by us and then---- [Victory]. Since no one died, and exactly because of that, that when it's over I want to ask the Gods you see."

And then with an obviously sarcastic smile----- he said with a smile as if looking at clowns.

""Hey hey right now how are you feeling?"---- like that."

------Really. Really, the eternal Great War, is going to end.

By the hands of Riku and ShuVi----her prided little brother and little sister----and merely almost two hundred of peoples.

Moreover----without even a single one being killed. Everything was for that sake. It was only for the sake of building up this situation.

Even if they thought of wanting to kill the gods and their creatures----- no, more like that would be the normal reaction.

Towards her little brother's figure laughing insolently, even after getting the skin, the internal organs burnt, losing an eye's sight and a arm, Coron's shoulders trembled.

Ending the war without even one person being killed----for that sake, he kept going until he became like this-----

"...That's why Coron, for just a little more, overlook it. And then, take care of everyone (humans)."

But, for Riku who was laughing so fearless.

The fact that even just breathing already became painful---- only ShuVi noticed.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

"...Riku.....go, sleep..."

"...I, can't...If we don't head out, for setting the Eensweg, right now..."

While Riku was laid in the bed writhing in agony, ShuVi nursed him.

He acted strong in front of Coron, but the truth was that everything was just as Coron pointed out.

----For starters, even the contaminated skin burned by the elemental bones alone, was already the cause of serious follow-up diseases.

If it's a human then becoming unable to stand up is obvious---- rather, originally, standing up was already irregular.

"...It's, alright...Riku's prediction, don't, miss. An attack, won't start, so soon....."

"......but..."

"...If you, rest a little...one, entire day...its fine...if it's Riku."

------Like always, my wife says crazy things without hesitation.

Even though Riku smiled bitterly, he----

"...That's, right...then today I'll concentrate on recovering, let's leave the heading out for the settings for tomorrow."

"...un."

"Hey ShuVi...sorry, for slowing you down."

"...Riku, is now, sleeping...not, slowing."

-----Riku gave a bitter smile, and even that made a sharp pain run through his entire body.

"Then I have one more request. Since today, I'll be sleeping and making an effort to recover----can you hold my hand?"

That was as if trying to withstand the pain, she understood that meaning.

At the same time----It was also the restraint 'don't go alone'---- the current ShuVi also understood that.

"......Un. I'll always, keep holding it. Be at ease...and rest...Riku."

--------,

"Hey, ShuVi."

He still can't sleep right. Riku asked.

"...un."

"...Thank you. Without ShuVi, I wouldn't be able to do this."

"...Not, over...yet."

"You're right...but, even to this point, if ShuVi wasn't here I wouldn't be able of coming this far."

----That's why, Riku said, while closing his eyes.

"Thank you, for coming to meet me...and also..."

As she wondered if he got sleepy, Riku dropped his tone, while his breathing became slow.

"I really, love you...from here on...too..."

...Just how much the pain from the erosion of the elemental bones tormented Riku, she wondered.

Even so from just ShuVi holding his hand, Riku started to sleep breathing peacefully.

----ShuVi thought. ShuVi----[likes] Riku.

But the decryption of the emotion [love]was still---- impossible.

Not being able to answer that word was surprisingly, incredibly frustrating.

Even so, she knew----what should be done. She can't allow Riku to die.

Riku will live for another eight hundred and ninety-one years. If he obtains the [Star Grail], that will be nothing but a fact.

------That's why.

"...Forgive, me...Riku...I'll be, back...soon..."

For now----she released, that hand.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----Setting number twenty-four complete. With the setting of the last eight Eenswegs, it'll be over.

ShuVi once again concluded that---- not bringing Riku along was correct.

The convert operation occurring is towards the current world's strongest powers crowding in this place, undoubtedly the [Land of the Decisive Battle].

Even though she got found out many times, she would "pick up" the target that sensed her, retreat and hid.

And in the time that even then she still got found, if Riku was there the chances of him losing his life in that place was high.

"...It's, alright...only eight settings...left, and I'll be going home, already...Riku, wait for, me..."

After that, she was prepared to be scolded by Riku as much as he wants.

She will definitely not allow Riku to die. Only eight left----searching for the next point----

"Oya~? If you keep staggering while walking like that---- you will end up stumbling on an unexpected encounter~"

----Reacting to the sudden voice coming from above, ShuVi turned around.

Prismatic hair and amber eyes. With wings as if made of light, and the proof of a Flügel, an unscientific light halo.

Comparing data--- ShuVi looked at it with a calm face, while suppressing her heart that considered it to be the worst outcome.

"---Greetings, scrap. Are you talking a walk today alone?"

Flügel--- Final Unit [Jibril]...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

I never thought that it would come the day where I would order myself, an Ex-Machina, something like this---- calm down.

An attack against an Ex-Machina to a race is a taboo. If I act like just a machine, just a responder---

"<Question>---- What business does the Flügel have with Ex-Machina?"

---That way of talking that wasn't used for a long while, now was painfully being used as an act.

But as if not minding it at all, Jibril continued.

"Yes~ the head of a Ex-Machina is, how surprisingly!!! Now along with Draconia, on the [Rare 5] you see~"

As if troubled, Jibril continued while wriggling her body.

"After all, ever since the attack of Aranreiv (True Dragon), laying a hand on a Ex-Machina was made into a taboo, and it was also one of the opinions inside the Avant-Heim, so its high rarity became even higher, and now it's a Platinum Head!"

"<Warning> I conclude that to be a correct confirmation. If you intend to turn hostile against this machine, then I shall execute the appropriate measure."

But with those words, Jibril's lips raised and answered.

"---With only one, [Proofer]~?"

----------Did she manage to keep the rush from showing in her expression?

Without caring about ShuVi who only worried about that, Jibril continued.

"I confirmed that there's no reaction of Ex-Machinas within 100km on all directions. So then why would the Ex-Machina who moves in a cluster, be able

to move alone? That piques my interest~ also----"

And, Jibril continued with a smile like a devil.

"If you're "alone", then I wonder if it can be that now you can't use your prized monkey-act[Analyze-Replication], and so I judge that it's a chance for me to take the rare trophy, your premium~ neck, so how is it?~"

ShuVi once again thought without letting it show in her voice----It was the worst.

Between all the Flügels, it just had to be the most irrational and strong one of that ridiculous race, to find her out; she had no choice but to recognize that it was just like Riku said, about chances and numbers being worthless.

----To think that the first card she would pull, would be a [Joker] of all things.

"Well then, I'll 'chop' your head, so please don't move. Resistance is futile, also it will spare both of us bother~ after all for Ex-Machinas [Death] doesn't mean anythi---"

".....I, refuse..."

"...----Yes? Did I hear it wrong?"

----[Death]---- reacting to that word, ShuVi opened her mouth.

The <Rule 2> Riku had decided ---- No one should be allowed to die ---- there's no way I can die.

Also, following[Death]---- the fear of thinking that she "will never be able to see Riku again"---- it trampled on that desire.

"....I don't want to, die... I must, not---- die...."

While Jibril was making a blank face, ShuVi continued.

"...This machine, had, its connection shut, off... defective machine... value, as Ex-Machina, none."

----That's why.

"...Shall make a petition...I wish to be, overlooked..."

But ShuVi, didn't notice, that she made the worst possible choice.

She didn't understood, the "most ridiculous race's most irrational one" in front of her that well.

"How surprising!... A machine that fears death!!? Not only that but an Ex-Machina made a petition!? On top of that it was cut off---a defective machine, you say!? I-i-it's no longer something like [Rare 5] you know?!!"

"........-------"

"Uehe, uehehehehheee~ it's a follow up so decisive that e-,everyone would get envious right!!"

Facing the Jibril that was dripping out drool, while releasing a lethal killing intent, ShuVi recognized the [Failure].

Negotiation----If it was Riku he could've made it go well, she really shouldn't had let go of his hand----but.

"...Last, warning..."

"Yes, please go ahead. The result won't change, so~"

Making a sword made of light appear, she looked at the Jibril who looked ready to start coming even now.

"...I don't want to, die...I can't die...But if even so, you plan on killing, then----"

ShuVi announced resolute.

---- Target and Self's Battle Potential, analyzing.

Target---- Flügel Jibril. Battle power amount unknown --- Variability set within Flügels values.

Self---- Ex-Machina Proofer[Analysis Unit]. Full capacity is 32% of the Combat Specialized Machine Kämpfer[Combat Unit]'s output.

Also, I can't utilize the Ex-Machina's greatest weapon that is the cluster---Machine connection inexistent.

The utilizable armaments are, from within all twenty seven thousand four hundred and fifty one available for operating in the cut-off situation, only forty seven.

Calculating probability of winning----Absolutely none. But----she once again thought about Riku's words.

In the Probability Theory, there's no[zero]----.

"<Lezing>Code 1673B743E1F255 Script E Activate----<Lossen>----"
(TL Note: dutch for “reading” and “unload”, respectively.)

Deploying all the weapons she could at the same time----ShuVi announced.

"----All armaments...war potential, war tactics, war strategies as a bet...Struggle for Life, commence."

"Oya? Ex-Machina should be a race able of analyzing and deciphering attack capacities, but..."

But towards ShuVi's battle declaration, Jibril answered, while making a face that would mock even a God.

"By any chance did youkill someone of laugh? This is an extremely unique one~"

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Fast decision----"Retreating Battle" ----anything but that has no chance of being victorious, that was the conclusion ShuVi reached.

All deployed armaments emitted ultra-high concentrated elementals in the form of particles, all at once.

If a normal living being----for example an elf was to even touch it, it would be certain death due to the amount of elements compressed, and---

"----<Over Boost>----!"

"Volatilization"----the moment it started, ShuVi disappeared from Jibril's vision.

A super acceleration, reached by granting directivity and a explosive impulse to the ultra-high concentrated elements. The explosive elements, while throwing up a huge amount of [elemental bones], and raising up a lot of dust and contamination----easily broke through the physics wall.

That's what the Ex-Machinas uses, originally being a race that can't use magic, a machine-like forced usage of "magic".

ShuVi moved with a feature appropriate of being called Instant Movement----but.

"...Don't tell me, you really don't think that you can run away from me with just this, right?"

Having erased distance itself through Spatial Teleport [Shift], and circled around her, Jibril scorned.

As if ridiculing, as if playing around--- Jibril swung down the light blade that destroyed mountains, but.

Inside her heart----ShuVi answered that question.

----There's no way I could think that.

"---- Recht-Harnas [Square Intersection]---"
(TL Note: In dutch it would be something like “straight armor”, but the kanji means Square Intersection.)

She pointed the ultra-high concentrated elements from the earlier acceleration, towards the upcoming light blade that couldn't be defended against, and volatilized it----in other words.

That power that overcomed physics, volatilizing without any directivity----it became a defensive attack.

By eliminating most of the ultra-high concentrated elemental boost and turning it into elemental bones, it expanded particles on the surface of the layer.

Instantly, the shock and energy expanded as if gouging out the earth...

----Just that had power of an scale enough to erase a small town but---

"Now that's a bother...a weapon that spreads elemental bones, you really aren't a machine gentle with the region, huh..."

----Recht-Harnas---- ShuVi's defense of advanced elemental bones contamination that could extinguish most living beings, was cut off by Jibril's mere gesture as if brushing away dust, while unpleasantly commenting on it.

Just as I thought, ShuVi asserted inside her heart. A Flügel nevertheless, even though they were born with the magic of Artosh, if something like elemental bones that interfere with magic, were to make direct contact with their materialized body, it would become poison for them----!

"But do you think that something like this is enough to do something to m---- huh?"

Looking over at the direction the attack's blue light had cut off, Jibril felt troubled that ShuVi's figure wasn't there.

Inside her heart----ShuVi once again answered that question.

---- There's no way I could think that.

At the same time she activated Recht-Harnas, she reactivated <Over Boost> and decided on taking a certain distance.

----From the beginning a simple Ex-Machine defeating a Flügel was, almost impossible.

Astronomical chances----even if a miracle occurred and it succeeded, it would go against the <Rules>Riku set.

Victory in a retreating battle. The victory condition, is only one----[escape].

"----<Lossen>---- ---- Einde-Pocrifen [False Epigraphy - True Dragon Roar]----!"

In the past the Ex-Machina combated it---- for ShuVi who stole Riku's homeland, it was a despicable weapon.

The greatest firepower ShuVi possessed that replicated Aranreiv's strongest attack Far Cry[Fallen Roar], would catch Jibril.

The storm of elemental bones that dirtied the world was blown behind---in the

cannon's mouth light started to gather.

Jibril turned her eyes towards the upcoming light, and got engulfed in that light----

----,

ShuVi apologized to Riku inside her heart. It was necessary to correct the map.

---The Einde-Pocrifen attack, at the same time it hit Jibril directly----it changed the land.

The instant it hit the target it exploded dying in red and vaporizing everything, dragging up a small scale of the crust, and with a ultra-high heat of many thousands decrees, reached up to the horizon...

Even if it's a Draconia, it's impossible to take a direct hit and end up unharmed; it has enough power to alter the form of the stars.

But, ShuVi never thought it was an opponent that could be defeated with just that.

"---Eensweg---!"

At the same time she confirmed the blast, ShuVi activated the armament.

It was the Shift (Spatial Teleport) used by the Flügels and the Elfs' counteraction, designed by the Ex-Machinas - "Space Disruptor".

The hole of the broken space is literally a One-Way Street that engulfed ShuVi's body, and closed off.

If she jumps to a distance that's impossible to sense even Jibril wouldn't give chasing.

But the distance that can be jumped within Eensweg is at most 100km----the same distance possible for Jibril to sense, and that she said there was no Ex-Machinas reaction within. If after the jump she intercept it again----"

"OYA? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?”

ShuVi's thoughts stopped.

In the middle of 0.000046 seconds before the broken space closed, a painfully insufficient time.

Jibril inserted her hands in the space----and forcefully, with plain brute strength opened it, and peeked inside with her head.

A voice echoing from hell, a face with a smile like of a Noh mask----
(TL Note: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noh)

"If you want to run from me, you shouldn't use a long distance jump, but enclose me with light dust and move to [outside my vision] before that, ok.... ah, or do you mean that, could it really be that,---"

Repeating it on the forcefully broken space by ShuVi----she "tore it off" as if a matter of fact.

ShuVi noticed an unknown emotion, instant reacted by changing position and started running while analyzing the situation.

"Did you really thought that the attack from before could even put a scratch on me?"

----Conclusion----this is a [nightmare].

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

It can't be. It can't be it can't be there's no way----!

Certainly, Einde-Pocrifen doesn't reproduce Aranreiv's Far Cry's destructive power perfectly. 43,7% of reproduction---- that's Zweihen[Examination Unit]'s report.

But, Aranreiv is, even within the Draconia, one of the top three crowned with the name of [King].

That individual, released Far Cry at the price of destroying himself----Even if it's 43%----

"...Aren't you, underestimating me a little too much...even though you're just a scrap...~"

Taking that "direct hit"----and being "unharmed"----

----Something like that----there's no way that can be----

"But for making me, need to deploy defensive magic, I shall praise you for that."

----With Jibril's words, ShuVi doubted her sensors having heard such a irregularity.

A Flügel, its body by itself is a race of magic born from Artosh (God of War).

That's why something called defensive magic, a technique that protects oneself----is constantly being deployed.

That's exactly why she calculated that Einde-Pocrifen could pierce through. But this Flügel----no.

Reconfirmation----this being should no longer be even categorized as a [Flügel].

This [Irregular]...Jibril...

By "doubting" the protection received by Artosh----she deployed an even stronger defense.

That's not an action of a Flügel. It's impossible. This individual----can't even be predicted anymo----

"For the sake of bringing back your head, I held back "all I could" but----I changed my mind."

What did this, [Irregular], just said? She said that she held back?

"I don't know whether, there's something called brain in you or not, but..."

Towards ShuVi who was making a blank face, she grabbed her skirt and raised it a little while slightly lowering her head, as if bowing.

Closed her fists, and with a face like steel, but like an angel, and like a devil...

"It seems like this has been wearing out for a little too long. Let's cool you down

a little----forever."

The next thing she could confirm, was her right arm being blown away.

Correction. That wasn't correct.

ShuVi (Analysis Unit)----The machine with the greatest specialization in recognition ability within the Ex-Machina, couldn't even notice a single thing.

The most that could be confirmed was only the damage report saying [Right arm lost].

Without even being allowed to understand what was done to her, her battle capacity was stolen----but.

"...Oya. I targeted the entire body but----did my hand slip?"

Is this what Riku----humans call [Intuition]?

She noticed later that by taking such an evasive action that ignored logics she barely managed to avoid being [heavily damaged].

".....I wonder why, I have a weird feeling..."

There's no way ShuVi could've knew, but Jibril started holding a certain conviction.

It was just a Ex-Machina, also just one [Proofer], yet it was surpassing my attacks?----

Why it was taking action alone----What did it possess that surpassed her own attacks-----

The interest hasn't died out but----Jibril said in a low tone, enough to ShuVi too perceive,

"I have a bad feeling about you. It's about time I scrapped you like it how should be, and bury you in the earth without questions."

Through the words that were as if they carried compressed killing intent, once again ShuVi understood.

There's no [zero] in Probability Theory. While believing in Riku, and betting against the cool chances of going to Nirvana in this engagement, she aimed for an escape.

But, after things went this far, even the fact about things not being about Probability Theory became something unrelated.

Against this monster[Irregular]----something like escaping, even surviving, was impossible, no matter what logic - or reasoning used to the extreme. And the one who concluded that was nothing else but the involuntary reasoning that ignores logic called [Intuition].

----But----even so, as ShuVi wiped away her thoughts.

----Even so----it was necessary to [win].

The one who should be an agglomeration of logic, ShuVi, clearly recognized that.

(...I don't want to, die... I'm scared, of...dying...Riku!)

I'll be unable to see Riku again.

That fact made her have an illusion, as if her thoughts circuit had frozen, and reminded her of something----something beyond that.

Something Riku----something her husband----something his companions, something the [ghosts]-

Got the skin burned and the insides charred out, and betted everything seeking----a single one victory.

(.....because of...ShuVi's, miss...becoming something like...[defeat]----)

I can't accept it. Definitely----there's no way I can accept it!!

----Then, what should be done.

----In this situation----for [victory], what should be done----while thinking so fast that even time seemed to stop, she thought of one "hand" to play.

Thinking of Riku it would be the worst method possible.

It would bring him the worst sensation, as if being crushed by his own self-hatred.

Even so----for me who brought up this situation of certain defeat----it's the sole victory chance I can bet on----

Then----

<Machine Identification number Üc207Pr4f57t9----Reconnection Request towards Übercluster Ein[Ü-Connected Units' First-In-Command Unit]>

"Communication"----I talk towards the Ex-Machina from the [cluster] that once excommunicated me from the link.

----There was no answer.

While Jibril was once again materializing the light, with eyes that said "the next won't miss",

<Reconnection Request! Life[Heart]'s analysis completed, there's no time----"Sharing"----please, the reconnection!>

----After the small time that seemed like an eternity----a communication got through.

<Üc207Pr4f57t9, you are permanently excommunicated from the link. The request has been denied.>

Even with the nearing sound of death, ShuVi still communicated as if roaring.

<Rejecting request's denial! Data sharing's transfer to Eintihi[Commander of All Connected Units] is strongly requested! Über-Ein, that includes all kinds of reports towards the [Proofer] Eintihi too, you should have no authority for rejecting the transference!!>
(TL Note: It's written □□□□□□ -lit. "Aintsihi", so I left it as Eintihi. He is a Proofer with the position of Commander.)

The rebuke towards the cluster's Bepher[Command Unit]----not only that, but towards ShuVi's insistence too----there was no answer.

But ShuVi in frustration, she continued the communication even as she yelled.

<Über-Ein... no, retract that... BLOCKHEAD!!>

<---------->

<----In truth, I don't want to hand it over to anyone!...These feelings...belongs to, ShuVi.>

----I like Riku. I don't want to separate from him; I got so much of it from Riku that I can't keep it inside, all those errors[Heart].

I decided that I don't want to hand it over to anyone. Because----"it’s embarrassing"....

"It belongs to ShuVi"----! To Hand that over----!!

<...I'm saying that...I'll hand it over!! Understand, what it means already...IDIOT!!!>

----Because, besides that, there's no other method.

Besides that, she couldn't think of any other way of undoing her miss, and allowing Riku to [be victorious].

Forget even that it's a communication. That's why----ShuVi let her voice out in a yell.

"....Stop talking, about the small stuff!!Carry on----THOSE FEELINGS!!!"

.....---------,

<Üc207Pr4f57t9. As expected you are broken.>

<....I, know!>

<You're contradicting. You're collapsing. Yet you are operating. It's irregular. It's wrong.>

<..That too, I, know!>

<That's why.>

<I judge that you are important sample data.>

----Instantly. The connection that was cut off----she felt being relinked to the cluster.

It's been a few years----having the sensations shared with four hundred and thirty seven machines, she included--- that feeling came back.

<I judge that you are a [special case]. Data sharing----commencing.>

The original, sensation as a Ex-Machina----cluster. Several as one colony. Shared thoughts.

Now that was----the sensation of having everything inside the head being looked through without reservation, was terribly disgusting.

Even so, right now, it's necessary----having concluded that, ShuVi shook her head.

<Now, until the sharing is complete, actions associated to your damaging are---->

Forbidden----and the communication that was to continue like that, after examining the current situation----had the words cut off.

Now that she was reconnected, all machines of the Übercluster that she belonged to understood the current situation.

----The exterminating enemy. The Flügel's strongest individual----Jibril.

And the single machine that's opposing it, the fact that it's still operating made all machines sense errors.

At that reaction, ShuVi laughed, thinking that she couldn't wait until the sharing is completed.

Because that error itself----is one emotion called [surprise].

Isn't that right? Thinking logically, the opponent is Jibril[Irregular] of all things.

A Flügel and----a single [Proofer] machine having a battle, that situation by itself----it's impossible right?

----But that's reality. That's what the [Heart] received from Riku□indicated----

Making a impossibility possible, the one end of that undeniable fact.

<----Situation understood. Üc207Pr4f57t9----All armaments possessed within the Ex-Machina's unrestricted use authorized.>

The weapons possessed within the Ex-Machina----the deploying network of all twenty-seven thousand four hundred and fifty one armaments have been released.

<Use every kind of armament and firepower on battle, and until the sharing is completed "obliteration" is forbidden.>

----At such a time, if it was a human----someone who had a soul, then it would say something like this right.

<..."Don't die"....won't you, say it...?>

Über-Ein won't understand. What difference in meaning could there be between obliteration and death----but----

<Until the sharing is completed, "don't die", this is a order and I won't approve rejection. Aus.>
(TL Note: Aus is german for “over”, as in ending a transmission.)

Sensing feedback in that answer, ShuVi thought----surely you would understand.

She raised her head, and what reflected in her eyes was the oncoming death----Jibril, and.

----The message □Four minutes and eleven seconds----until the sharing is complete□.

She wondered if there was something wrong. No matter which data was it, the sharing never took more than three seconds---

Thinking that, but ShuVi shook her head and consented.

It's obvious----since it's the sharing of the [Heart].

The huge amount of thoughts, feelings, sensations and memories that couldn't be kept inside, received from Riku.

No matter what armament, battle plans, information, it was much----much, much more [heavier].

Riku's face surfaced on her mind, and ShuVi sadly smiled----this is a [game].

Four minutes and eleven seconds, in other words two hundred fifty one seconds, that's the amount of time that she must survive, from the death incarnated that is Jibril.

If she can stay alive until the time limit she wins, and if she dies she lose.
It's...the kind of [game] that Riku hates the most.

"...Those feelings, heart...born, from a machine...the life I received, all of it---

----I'll bet it all--- on those two hundred fifty one seconds---!!

"----<ALLES-LOSSEN>----!"
(TL Note: dutch for "unload all".)

All the armaments, all firepower, all tactics possessed within the Ex-Machina got deployed at the same time to its limit.

Those tools that were made solely for the sake of massacring and destroying, brought on by fools----giant wings of steel spread.

"---Oya, are you planning on alluring me?...I couldn't ask for more~"

While saying that Jibril once again----as if releasing light spread the giant wings----and laughed.

Flügel's [Irregular Individual] Jibril. Her combat abilities are even now an unknown value.

It has been concluded that, even while using all of Ex-Machina's armaments, defeating her alone is impossible.

Possibility of existence's time limit----estimation impossible.

----But, there's no problem, ShuVi nodded.

"----<Vorm>...Versus Unknown Combat Algorithm----Activate."
(TL Note: vorm is dutch for form/shape/build.)

After saying that and giving out what she built, she could feel the cluster receiving errors.

ShuVi thought----why get surprised. If the opponent is unknown, then it's all about hypothesizing everything that you couldn't hypothesize.

Don't try to understand. Don't try to plan it out. Believe in your sensations and move----just that alone.

Survive the [Death] in front of her eyes for two hundred fifty one seconds.

The logic (theory) asks----can you do it?

The error (emotion) replies----it's a foolish question.

Humans have been surviving for a time close to an eternity----under worse conditions.

Compared to that, what would even four minutes or five minutes be----!!

"..."ShuVi"..."

"Yes?"

"Name, I haven't...said it..."

----That's, "me"... what Riku gave me, an important and dear---- me (name).

After looking doubtful for an instant, Jibril made a small bow, and answered.

"Is that so. I am Jibril, nice to be acquaintance with you----and"

"Goodbye."

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Standing in a land that was like a cataclysm had run through it,

"...A mere doll cornering me to this point...you have the nerve."

It's just an Ex-Machina, a single [Proofer] machine, yet being unable to destroy it, that made Jibril speak with anger.

"......I won't, die----I can't, die...yet...----!"

ShuVi moved, overcoming the limits. Turning the members into plasma, she released a white pulsating light.

Unable neither to react nor to sense, inside Jibril's storm of attacks, she stood painfully.

By making full use of the Ex-Machina's every armament, and everything taught by Riku (humans), she struggled against death.

----Don't stand in your opponent's stage; definitely don't hand over the spotlight.

----Make your opponent get careless; make them understand that you are a worthless opponent.

----Make your opponent be wary, make them have the illusion that you're not an opponent that will make a careless move.

----Don't provoke your opponent; if you just invite him you'll be able to see the result----

Against an attack which you can't react to you should just predict it beforehand. If you can't even imagine then you should just reference----

And then evade by a single hair-width of distance, handling, offsetting---- trembling anger overcame Jibril's amusement.

The Ex-Machinas of the cluster already had their understanding fail, and now are just calling it an [error].

But----what the fully-wounded body of ShuVi was seeing, was only the few numbers displayed in her vision.

----<<Seventy-two seconds.>>

(...Hey...Riku...I wonder, why...)

When holding hands together with Riku, the time seemed like one hour felt like an instant, but----

Without being able to perfectly handle Jibril's attack, the right abdomen got blown away.

----<<Fifty one seconds.>>

(...Riku... right now, one second, feels like an eternity...you know...)

The light blast released once again by Jibril, when it was about to explode on the left hand,

"-----!!? <Lossen>----[Eensweg] !!"

Because of the unbelievable speed that ShuVi opened Eensweg, the light that was deflected,

Pierced not the left arm----but the chest.

"----Finally you committed a miss-like mistake...you really gave me trouble."

Towards Jibril's voice, ShuVi looked above to the sky and asked----

"...Miss...?...what are you talking about, I wonder..."

Certainly now moving is impossible, and with this her movements were completely sealed off.

But, ShuVi smiled as she moved her gaze.

Left hand----towards the ring finger----

She protected, the glimmering ring.....

"...Goodbye, though----I humbly "apologize" for calling you scrap."

By her look, Jibril seemed to feel something----but ShuVi had no way of knowing.

dokun!----. A strong pulsation of elements was born as if that by itself was an attack.

And above ShuVi who tumbled on the ground without any way to do anything, highly on the sky.

With the light halo as the center----like a giant painting, Jibril said while spreading both of her arms----

"You, are a "threat" that must definitely be eliminated here----I recognize that you are worthy of being called[Enemy]."
(TL note: in the "you"(anata), she says "Anata-sama". -sama is a suffix of respect.)

It couldn't be compared to the mechanic elements that the soldiers of Ex-Machina used.

From the air, from the stars, the forcefully drawn elements----concentrated, compressed and condensed.

The shining elements----wavered in Jibril's both hands, and an unstable [spear] appeared.

----------[Air Strike]-----

Without any room for doubt, the Flügel's body's entire inner workings changed into a connection nerve, sucked power from the Elemental Circuit's Power Flow Source and threw it----literally, the Flügels' greatest and strongest attack.

The Ex-Machinas also have a weapon with the workings of the [Air Strike]. Even for ShuVi too it wasn't the first time seeing it.

But on Jibril's case that was---- that swirling power,

That [Air Strike] was, beyond the data, beyond any knowledge----the difference in the numbers was too great.

ShuVi regretfully, sadly dropped her expression.

----[Irregular] Jibril----as expected, nothing could be do----

<Sha,ring....Com,plete.>

Because of the influence of the giant amount of power swirling above her head, sound got mixed in----the communication arrived.

----...about time,

Since when----she didn't notice.

<Üc207Pr4f57t9 reviewed---- "Player[Legacy Unit] ShuVi"...>

What was displayed in her view was a---- <<Sharing Complete>> message,

<You're allowed to rest and leave everything else to "us"----have good dreams.>

----While the [Air Strike] poured down, seeing Jibril's face----ShuVi laughed.

----This [game]---- it's ShuVi's victory, you know...

"----------?"

Jibril's expression looked like she felt an uncomfortable feeling, but ShuVi looked away from her face and raised her last voice.

"----<Lossen>----[Keine Eintrag]----!!"
(TL Note: Keine Eintrag is the german for “no entry”.)

----Protecting against that [Air Strike] is impossible.

Just like Jibril said, she would become scrap without question... a way to overturn that, doesn't exist.

But with Keine Eintrag's full output, if it's just diverting the trajectory for "one half and twelve millimeters"----she should be able to protect it.

...From all the things she received, from Riku, this ring alone....

The [Heart] she received from Riku, announced that the unjust and unreasonable, absolute power was pouring down.

The direct hit would cause----this body, thoughts too, after a tenth of seconds, to disappear from this world----

.....But, why is it.

The upcoming Jibril's [Air Strike], felt terribly slow.

Sensing the thoughts' irregular acceleration----is this what the humans call, the revolving lantern, she wondered.
(TL Note: she say soumatou = □ □ □ which means revolving lantern. I don't know how it's relevant, but she must be talking about that sensation of time slowing down before an accident or the likes.)

ShuVi thought----why, did it become like this.

The accelerated thoughts, instantly pointed the answer.

It's not like it was necessary; it was a really simple talk.

(...Riku...ShuVi, as expected...if Riku isn't here...can't do anything...)

----Yet she still thought that she could do the Eensweg's settings alone, that there was no need to expose Riku to danger.

That excess of confidence, brought on this result----as expected Riku was right.

If it was Riku then probably----no, definitely. He would be able to avoid Jibril and prevent a battle----I can be sure of that.

Why did she let go of Riku's hand. Even though she had decided that she wouldn't doubt him anymore.

She was told to always stay by his side. She shouldn't have left Riku's side for even a second...

(...I'm, sorry...Riku...even so, I left you...the last hand...so...)

She knew, that Riku definitely would not be satisfied with it.

----But, she also knew that Riku wouldn't refuse it.

She knew how much it'll be painful for him, and yet.

He can't reject it; she knew that so well that it hurt her, and yet.

----I'm sorry, Corona (Onee-chan)----ShuVi----until the very end----

----I couldn't become----"a wonderful bride", you see...

----Even, so----

"...Riku...hey, Riku..."

She called the one who wasn't here, she called the name of her husband.

Her capacity to produce voice was long broken. It didn't even become a sound.

There's no way it would reach; even so, she must say it no matter what.

"...ShuVi...finally...understood...you see?"

She remembered, that there was a word she never once said.

"...ShuVi...having met Riku----was really...happy..."

Now----since she finally, understood it clearly.

"...Next time...I won't go away, never again..."

"...I, really... love... you--------.....

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Mountains----and even the sky covered by dust was pierced by the [Air Strike], and was now finally ceasing.

"...Haa...haa.....haa-----!"

Due to the overuse of power, the lack of elements caused her to be unable to maintain her natural shape----- her appearance turned into that of a young child.

Jibril held her breath and descended, into the place where her [Enemy] lost her form and appearance.

"...Aah~...really...with this there was not even any merit in doing all that..."

----For starters, that was a battle that started just because she wanted the head of an Ex-Machina that was taking action alone.

Because of its unique actions, her desire for its head increased even more----and the result was [Air Strike].

Jibril was assaulted by a trembling whose meaning is unknown even to her----Her instincts told her that that machine was a [enemy] that must be destroyed.

But, after standing calmly and looking back----she wondered.

"...I didn't got the head, all parts were blown away, and this form..."

Saying that, after looking down at herself who regressed to a young child, Jibril released a long sigh.

"Haa~...I should report to Azriel-senpai, at least that there was a weird Ex-Machina----it would be good if that muscle brain with a flower garden in it, get even at the very least the meaning of making me use [Air Strike]..."

But----after once again looking down at herself who regressed to a young child, she whispered with a headache.

"If I stand in front of senpai with this appearance...she won't let go of me, right..."

The small Flügel, started flying towards the horizon while troublingly flapping its wings.

----Small. Without noticing, a too small silver circle shining----...



■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The game is over, ShuVi is dead.

After receiving the [ghosts]'s report and acting firmly, returning to the room was the limit.

Opposed to him was the empty table, he moved the pieces alone where he and ShuVi played chess together many times.

In a very, very far away past, just like he did when he was a child. The game that he definitely couldn't win----

While moving the pieces he looked to the empty seat in front of him.

Even if his sanity is questioned, it can't be helped if it can be seen----As expected it was there just like it was in the past.

A young boy with a fearless smile----the one who ShuVi said that she believed, the God of Games was there.

"Hey...why, can't I win, I wonder..."

Towards the young boy who definitely wouldn't answer, he continued asking.

"I thought that this time I'll definitely win...together with ShuVi----with everyone, I thought I could win."

----<Rule 2>No one should be allowed to die.

----<Rule 6>Anything that opposes the above, shall be considered a defeat.

"Why, can't I win----I wonderrrr...!"

That's right, from the point that it opposed this game is over-----once again, I lost.

Even more when ShuVi-----

"What...was lacking...tell me-----!! Hey, you are there right!!?"

Riku asked towards the void so seriously, that if there was someone looking, surely he wouldn't be able to help but think that he finally became crazy.

He yelled towards the young boy sitting opposed to him-----towards the God of Games.

The young boy didn't answer. But----it felt like he erased his smile, and lowered his head.

"Hey I'm begging you...only once, am I not allowed a victory, not even once? Then----"

"THEN WHY----DID YOU GIVE ME (HUMANS) A [HEART]?!!"

----The [heart] that ShuVi longed for, and she opened.

But now, without being able to see any meaning in it, and with his body creaking, Riku screamed.

"I don't know which damn God created humans, but! If it's to be in this world just to lose lose and keep on losing and patiently being killed and mourn just to lose again----then why the hell something like a [heart] exists, answer meeee!!!"

After yelling as if clinging to it with a staggering body----

"Hey, you are there right, I don't know who you are but, please answer me----I'm begging you...!"

----There, was no answer.

It's not like he expected an answer in the end, but his body was all battered from the start.

While breaking down, after his yelling scattered and falling as if leaning on the back of the chair, he gazed at the force map.

-----The situation was vaguely being sorted.

Making all races be cautious of each other, and creating the scenario of [Artosh Camp] versus [the rest] was a success.

But "originally as planned"----one of them would definitely, plan out a preemptive strike.

----If the plan is made by the [coalition] first, it'll be a stalemate until the [Elf Alliance] and [Dwarf Alliance] find a method to nullify each other's [trump cards], the Arka-shi-anse and Zuibaku.

Even if they keep on watching for a long time, within ten years the complete collision will start, and the Artosh Camp surely will lose.

And in the returning blade, this time it'll be the Elf and Dwarf shooting each other----until this one or that one perishes.

----If the preemptive strike comes from Artosh's Side then, how it will be.

Now Artosh Camp is in an advantageous position----because they possess the [Divine Strike]. But the [coalition] won't take a formation that will make them perish with a single [Divine Strike] too. And Artosh who overused its power will be temporary weakened----and will result in him using the power of Avant-Heim to battle. That's what the [coalition] is targeting.

No matter how much of a powerful Phantasma it is, Ark-shi-ense is a Phantasma Slayer, and Zuibaku is a Old Deus Slayer. If the preemptive strike comes from the Artosh Camp then there's no chance of victory for Artosh.

----Or so the [coalition] is being made to think, but the reality is different.

Artosh's [Divine Strike] is----a measure to invite the entire force's full fire power.

That's why the result is the Artosh Camp and the [coalition]'s----mutual destruction.

In other words there's no way a [victory] will come out from the preemptive strike of the Artosh Camp.

At the longest----[ten years]...the war will stop.

----[ten years]. That's right, it's [ten years].

That's what the one hundred and seventy-nine [ghosts], bet everything, abandoned everything but their life for----and then.

That's what he gained by losing ShuVi, at most, even if you look on the long term, merely ten years of stalemate.

Suddenly, he felt that he heard someone saying.

----Ten years of peace. Isn't it enough? Isn't it more like, you did really well?

"....."

-----With only a human body, against a God, you made him stop the war for ten years you know?

"....."

----Isn't it enough. Isn't it more than enough. More like, it's more than good enough you know.

--------I think it's worthy of being called a [victory] you----

"-----..... are you screwing up with me?"

Was that someone else's voice, or his own's inner excuse?

Whichever it may be, Riku roared----with a voice that seemed as if his throat was exploding.

"Risking everything the humans had! Losing ShuVi!! Merely for some trifling peace of a transient time like ten years and you say it's worth of being called a victory!!? And what about after that!? It will be a world of living in fear of death once again are you half asleep!!! It doesn't become even a draw----the scale hasn't equaled up even by a little!!"

.....

The only answer was the silence, and the young boy he saw until a little before too, was no longer there----

"...haha, I'm, really no good already, right..."

Neither ShuVi nor Coron is by his side, and the game too, already ended.

Then----there's no more need of acting strong, right.

After smiling bitterly and recognizing it----aah that's right, the entire body hurts.

The skin contaminated by the elemental bones, gives an incessantly pain. He can't even remember anymore when it was the last time that he was able sleep□ soundly. Even drinking just water alone is enough to feel the throat burning. His narrowed view too, if he loses focus he feels like it will close up for the eternity that way.

----Aah that's right. I recognize it...once again----I lost.

In the end it was a life that I wasn't able to win even once----I'm already tired of it.

If ShuVi was here, I thought that I could go on living even on such a world.

By talking with ShuVi, by seeing her face, by holding her hands; even this pain would be forgotten.

----Suddenly, he remembered ShuVi's words.

[...I won't, let you die...Riku will...live...until ShuVi, dies...]

Aah that's right. If ShuVi died then, it's already fine right?

Just lean the back on the chair and leave the body to it, release the strength from the muscles and in this way.... as if sleeping...come...

---------.....

"----Willer[One with Will] Riku."
(TL Note: It is written □ □□□ □□ –lit. Shupiiraa, but the kanji reads “one with will”, which is eine mit willen in german. So I kept it as Willer, which seemed more appropriate.)

The falling consciousness was called back on the spot, along the soul that was falling along with it.

He sluggishly turned around, towards the familiar, yet unheard----somehow mechanic-like voice.

A black, shadow-like robed figure was standing there; where did he enter from and since when he was there?

"......Who are you?"

-----What are you, he won't ask.

There isn't even a need to ask. What he saw from the gaps in the robe spoke vividly.

A body of machines----it's not ShuVi----an Ex-Machina.

"...I don't have a name but, going by what I'm called----I shall name myself Eintihi[Commander of All Connected Units]."

What business do you have----when Riku was about to ask that while being cautious,

"----I came to fulfill the legacy, entrusted by Player[Legacy Unit] ShuVi."

Being anticipated, the Ex-Machina man----Eintihi said that, and extended his hand.

After receiving what was given out----Riku silently, stiffened.

A small silver circle. Dirtied, and distorted----but undoubtedly ShuVi's ring----

"----Willer Riku, still, hasn't lost yet."

"...Wha,t?"

Towards the still silent Riku, the Ex-Machina man----Eintihi told indifferently.

"---- ----In the <Rules> Willer Riku developed, the fact the loss of a tool won't be accepted is not included."

----Instantly, Riku clenched his fist as if wanting to punch that face.

My wife----ShuVi----referring to her as a tool, you really have the nerve I like it.

Be it an Ex-Machina or whatever I don't care but this guy alone----!!

While swinging his fists like that, in the clenched fist----the sensation inside it made his body freeze.

Eintihi said, entrusted legacy.

In the ring entrusted to Riku, its contents spoke shortly.

---- "Think like that". If he thought like that----

"If I think like that----the fact of having lost because of ShuVi's defeat, will disappear...you mean?"

.....don't screw with me.

For Riku who said that while looking downwards, Eintihi said.

"----Recorded Message [*Check*...Riku...the rest, I'm counting on you----]---- Over."

"...Is that, all?"

"----------That's right."

Riku who was smiling bitterly moved his vision, and once again saw the figure of the young boy in the empty seat.

The young boy's mouth moved----"The game isn't over, yet."----he said.

"Haha...that's cruel, ShuVi...that play was too cruel..."

Riku let out a empty laugh elevating to the sky, as if bearing up with something.

----Aah, as expected a [heart]is too unpleasant, ShuVi.

Why did you, long for such a thing...

...You would entrust such a role of all things to me----

That weakness was almost leaking out, but Riku barely managed to swallow it.

And then after he gripped the ring----Riku recited, the long forgotten incantation.

If that is ShuVi's [Legacy]...the wish from ShuVi's [heart], then.

If ShuVi said that, it is the sole method left, to stand up again from back foot then----

As the husband I can't help but believe and answer it right...even if it's painful enough to break down.

----ShuVi who entrusted me this wish. She must've held a self-hatred even greater than this.

That's why I dared to do it----to what ShuVi broke.

In the end, just one more time----I'll cast it, really firmly.

----------, ---------- *click*.

Chapter 5 --- --- 1÷0 = Etherealness

“Nyaha~, Jii-chan is a worrier nya~♪”

While laughing like that the Flügel’s eldest sister----the First Unit – Azriel flew as if bouncing.

“Jii-chan gets irritated easily nya~...but! That too is also cute nyaa~!! □ A small Jii-chan too is really cute nyaa~... haa... the restoration spell is so unpleasant nya.”

Arziel intentionally favored the outermost number----Jibril, who was currently the youngest sister.

Jibril whose actions couldn’t be read, was trackless, and freely uninhibited, would go out alone, and return after subduing even a Draconia.

Such erratic objective and reason, no one could guess it.

But, that too was part of the “imperfection” given by the Master, and as such it was considered especially adorable.

----Although, the Jibril in question considered that to be genuinely annoying.

Taking the enormous power the Flügels possess, and putting it all in a single strike and releasing it----that’s the [Air Strike].

After Jibril used that, and returned home in the form of a young child, Azriel kept rubbing Jibril’s cheeks for an entire week.

After she finally snapped Jibril requested for the restoration spell----to recover her lost power, and is currently with her functions on hold.

Honestly, the natural recovery----would take fifty years, though Azriel even thought that it was fine to wait----

--------.....

After returning to the area of the throne, Azriel folded her wings, lowered her light halo, and slowly kneeled.

“How is Jibril [Outermost Individual]?”

The one relaxing in the supreme seat, is a man exposing sturdy muscles like boulders----

The strongest God and War God, the creator of the Flügels----Old Deus Artosh.

A gigantic build which is many times our own. A black beard stiff like steel hanging out, and bearing on the back eighteen wings just like as if wearing a mantle. With deep carved features, just by being looked down by those sharp golden-eyes, Azriel felt like her brain had gone numb.

But, Azriel knows. Even with that greatness she couldn’t help but hold fascination and awe.

She herself is a fragment of the creator, a single drop in the great ocean, nothing more than a slight representation of the mighty power.

“She engaged an Ex-Machina during her solo campaign, and due to the wear of the use of [Air Strike]she’s currently under the restoration spell, my Lord.

Azriel reported reverently as if praying, but honestly is was a story whose meaning was completely unclear.

It was just an ironscrap crawling around----It was just garbage that could be an eyesore if it’s in a group.

The one who turned laying the hands on them into a taboo was Azriel herself, but that wasn’t because she felt that it was a threat.

It was just because, she extremely disliked having the power bestowed upon them by the Lord being poorly imitated.

If they went with all the Flügels, they could annihilate that bunch of iron scrap without giving them time for even a single one [reaction].

----Even though, it was supposed to be like that.

There’s the true meaning of Jibril----who poured down a fully-powered [Air Strike]on a single one of those scraps.

“----I see. Kuku, I see----“

The Lord laughed highly as if knowing something, but Arziel didn’t understand that divine meaning either.

The Lord doesn’t talk much. Therefore she couldn’t guess the heart of the Lord.

----No, she thought and felt ashamed at her own arrogance.

It was the height of disrespect, someone like her wanting to guess the profound Lord’s, heart of a God.

The Lord is the strongest. The Lord is the pinnacle. The strongest God, War God Artosh----the King amongst the Kings.

The greatest one----the Lord who has the concept of [War] as his roots possess no enemies. It’s because he is the strongest that he is therefore the strongest.

But for Azriel, it has been a while since she saw the Lord with that look----with an ongoing ferocious grin.

How many thousands, how many tens of thousands years, the Lord has wistfully, seated lazily on his throne while only supporting his cheek----

And now----he looks so cheerful that anyone at his side can see it just by looking.

“It’s so close---finally, the one who will be the murderer of mine seems to have appeared.”

At those words Azriel swallowed her breath, no way, she answered while she flinched her eyebrows.

“On this land, the one can match myself doesn’t exist.”

At the Lord’s melancholy, Azriel too only knew the reason for that----the Lord is the God of War.

----War is in other words, killing each other.

Compete, struggle, kill and be killed, by risking that life and death, polish one’s

own existence and soul.

That exchange that continues in a circle itself, was the concept that gave birth to the Lord, and was his essence.

That's why the Lord stands in the battlefield, and call in killing intents.

Hate, be angered, rebel, risk your ephemeral life, to the limit of the wisdom, and foolishly challenge me.

All of that----it's exactly because it'll be trampled upon with a overwhelming power----that he is, therefore, the [Strongest].

He is the one who spread weapons on the world, and represents the power and law. The one who defines strongest, that is what the Lord is.

...But, a one-sided massacre----can't be called [War].

Which is why----the Lord sank in the eternal boredom.

"The strongest challenged by no one...what meaning is there in it?"

And instantly, the Lord erased the smile and looked down at the lower bounds with a cold glare----it was on that moment.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

<----All Kämpfers [Combat Units], Himea-Pocrifen [False Epigraphy – Air Strike]----<Lossen>---->

It was right behind, the Phantasma Avant-Heim who swam through the sky.

<----Aim – Correcting Deviations – Fixed--------Don't kill ok?>

<Jawohl!>
(TL Note: Jawohl is german for yes/understood/affirmative.)

Immediately after, a historical volley that affected the destiny of the star----more than one thousand and two hundreds [Air Strikes] were shot.

And "from behind" the Avant-Heim----the [Coalition] was bombarded.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Abruptly----towards the flash of light that burned the sky, and the land, Azriel screamed.

“W-w-what-nyaaa!? Right now, did someone shot a [Air Strike]-nya!?”

“I-it’s unclear! There’s also no response from within the Avant-Heim----“

The Flügels who were packing in the area of the throne were in turmoil, and moved about in confusion.

One would deploy search magic; one would use Shift and fly out to the outside sky.

In the middle of that, Azriel suddenly, remembered Jibril’s words.

It acted alone, it made bizarre movements, and made Jibril use even the [Air Strike]----

“----Ex-Machina...monkey act is their trash of special skill...”

What did this action brought on. It’ll be seen as an preemptive strike from our side----a complete collision.

“Nyaha~, you’re really underestimating us-nyaa, your bunch of scraps...!!”

Azriel who understood the situation let out an ominous smile, and threw out instructions in rapid-succession.

“Rafiel-chan, along with a group of nine wings, intercepts any aviation that looks like it may shoot the Dwarfs’ [Zuibaku], without letting a single one escape-nya. Sarakiel-chan will bring all the wings from ten until eighteen and go to the Elfs at the fastest----“

“Ku----kuku----kuhahahaha!!”

With that voice, at the same time that incredible laugh echoed, all Flügels stopped in their tracks.

"Hahaha!! I see, "you" are the one who will be the murderer of mine. It was

unexpectedly fast hahaha!! ! !"

Towards the lord who continued to laugh and made even Avant-Heim tremble, Azrael fearfully said.

"W-with all respect, but there's no way those mere Ex-Machinas could destroy the Lord----"

But as expected just like always, the Lord----doesn't talk much.

Was it a God's insight, or was it the competence of a War God, he spoke as if----no, as a fact that he knew everything.

"Ex-Machina? "What are you talking about"?"

With that single sentence he cut off Azrael's thoughts, and the Lord laughed.

Or maybe it was just like he knew, as if welcoming something that he had long awaited for----he looked at the horizon.

"Indeed it makes sense that the one who will oppose myself who is the Strongest would be the Weakest----Isn't that so, "wolf"?"
(TL Note: for those who didn't get it, remember what Riku said in chapter 3? About how "there's a talking wolf inducing the situation of the war"...)

That's right----after weaving the words, the Lord raised his right arm.

With just that----with only that the Avant-Heim trembled, the space, and the time groaned.

Between the Flügels lined up in that place, a small scream-like voice was raised.

The Lord, announced.

"All hands----on your positions."

What those few words that erased Azriel's instructions meant was, only a single thing.

----The God of War, the strongest God, the King amidst any and all Kings, the Lord's----full power.

It would gather the [Air Strikes] from all fragments that are the Flügels and bundle them all together and release, one strike made of countless unrivaled and directed absolutely ground-breaking attacks.

----[Divine Strike]----

“W-with all respect my Lord, that bunch of toys are surely targeting this-nya!?”

Make him fire the [Divine Strike]through the engagement with the coalition, and imitate-replicate it was the Ex-Machinas’ objectives.

To Azriel who appealed like that the Lord spoke, with an arrogance only allowed for him.

“So what about it.”

With the pair of ferocious golden-eyes looking with anticipation, Azriel stood up like she was hit by a lightning bolt.

The Lord is the strongest God (King), and we are its subordinates.

The Lord is absolute. The Lord is the strongest. The strong is in other words the Lord, and the weak is in other words----everything else besides the Lord.

If the weak employ plans with cheap tricks, what should be done by the strong, by the King, by the God, by the Lord----?

Feeling ashamed of herself who forgot that for an instant, Azriel yelled.

“All Flügels----prepare the [Divine Strike]----entrust everything to Artosh-sama-nya!”

Just like Azriel a few moments ago, there were ones who hesitated by being concerned about the Ex-Machinas’ imitation----

The Lord doesn’t talk. But the divine intention loaded in that ferocious grin, was spoken through Azriel.

“The Lord is the strongest----unmatched between the heavens and earth! Then!! In front of the cheap tricks and foolish plans employed by the weaks, what is

there to fear, what is there to hesitate, what is there to doubt-nya!!”

Reacting to Azriel’s words, the Flügels gathered and made their wings flow.



“Rejoice the hatred, devour the wrath, allow the rebellion! The one who loves that foolishness is the Lord, the Lord who created the Flügels----the Sole King, the embodiment of the strongest, offer those wings for the decision of the Lord, and it’ll be shown-nya!”

For those ignorant who don‘t know what the Lord is----

“That as long as you feel like it----just trample on everything, that is what it means to be [the strong]!!”

While the Flügels released the power they possessed, the Lord deepened his satisfied smile.

And then he announced, with a silent voice that made the heavens and earth tremble.

“Bunch of small fry (Machines and Elfs and Dwarfs and Dragons), bunch of fools who declares themselves Gods before me----there are no particulars.”

No matter what it may be, in the end all of them are nothing but small fry.

All things in the universe, anything in the heavens or earth, when facing a power that destroys everything universally, everything altogether shall return to ashes.

----That was, the decision of the War God Artosh who is the strongest and the King (God) of the world.

All the Flügels, were pouring down all their elements which is the [Air Strike], on the raised arm of the Lord.

But as expected, Azriel couldn’t guess the heart of the Lord.

While the laws of the universe lamented, and the order of the stars distorted with that arm as the center----

“I was tired of waiting, my “Natural Enemy”.”

She surely heard, the small murmur of the Lord, but that meaning was even

now----

“If being broken by the weak is the destiny of the strong then, sure enough the strongest is the [Essence] of mine right.”

The power will manifest, the method will show, and the strongest will define.

In the right arm of the Lord, a [Power (Law)] that no one in this world could do anything about it, was being gathered.

Without even standing up from the throne, as expected the left arm was supporting his cheek, and his ferocious grin collapsed.

He expanded the shining stark white wings of light, and along with the glee that filled his chest, the Lord----said.

“In any case----concluding today, I will know the eternal question of mine.”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Sink Nirvalein cursed herself from a few minutes ago for rejoicing for even an instant.

At the view in front of her eyes, before the upcoming storm that would bring an end to the world----a “question which mustn’t be thought of” was born.

“...Just...what, the hell, is a Old Deus...?”

----------.....

The coalition fleet deployed surrounding the Artosh (camp)----was suddenly bombarded with [Air Strikes].

Sink, instantly found out that it wasn’t an attack from the Flügels, and gave corresponding orders to the Elf Alliance.

Clearly----the elemental reaction was wrong. It’s also because that even with those [Air Strikes] there “were no deaths”.

And above all that there was “no meaning” for the Artosh Camp to bombard with [Air Strike]. If he was going to fire then it would be the [Divine Strike]----the

opponent should also know that anything besides that won't become an effective attack on the [Coalition].

Therefore she was able to find out----for Sink who knew about the [Ghost] of that day, that it was an false attack for the sake of making a surprise attack against the War God, under the guise of the preemptive strike from the Artosh Camp, in order to grant "this side" time to make a preemptive attack with the greatest firepower.

Sink quickly ordered all fleets of the Elf Alliance to release the cast of all bullets of [Arka-shi-anse]. From the eighteen shots half of them were towards Artosh----and following it was for the sake of immediately shotting down the Dwarf Alliance.

And then she received the report that the release of the cast was almost complete----it was on that moment.

----From Avant-Heim, the representation of power flowing out from it that didn't stop on just being aberrant...

----It was exactly "a power outside logic"...the divine light of destruction that made you sense the heavens and earth cower swirled.

Even Sink who was an Octo-Caster wasn't allowed to understand or guess, a power outside logic----she ordered intuitively.

To the entire coalition----the Dwarf Alliance who is their imaginary enemy included, to share all information and fleets.

Though each race and each fleet used its own observation method to understand the situation----the report was uniformly the same.

Namely----[impossible to measure].

Similarly both Old Deus from the [Coalition] side---- Forest God Cainasu, even the Forge God Ookein, went silent.

The pulse of power that made the stars shakes. Everything led to this place, finally everyone understood it uniformly.

----[Divine Strike]----that power, no one could see through it at all.

The [Coalition]had a unified view and promptly decided to bombard Avant-Heim with the entire firepower.

In face of that, the dispute between the alliances was a secondary or a tertiary thing----it was an unquestionable power that convinced them that it was like that.

And then----as if almost saying that, it was “waiting for that” ----

----------.....

The God of War let out an unmatched single attack----namely [Divine Strike].

It was the trump card of the races that excelled the most in slaughter, a power that burned through one continent.

Even after colliding all at once with the released [Divine Strike], it was unable to offset it----that swirled.

The power born from outside logic, shined brilliantly. The raging destruction, even now it killed the heavens and earth.

[Arka-shi-anse]----it was a spell that made the body of a Phantasma self-destruct, and forcefully releases its power. And on top of that property, it was a power that could destroy multiples Phantasmas with a single attack. All the bullets that the Elfs could operate----all eighteen shots were bombarded. Along that, were all the bullets of the Dwarfs’ [Zuibaku]that rivaled it----twelve shots. Furthermore, eight Draconias obeyed the contract, offered their lives and added eight shots of [Far Cry]----

“Even so it doesn’t stop----just what is an Old Deus!?”

Old Deus Artosh----I see, that power is, without a doubt a feat of God.

But if you say that then the creator of [Arka-shi-anse] and also the Elfs----the functioning one hundred and eighty Sextus-Casters under the divine blessing of the Old Deus Cainasu, even thought that's also the same feat of God----what’s this difference between heaven and the earth.

Through the view in front of the eyes that is breaking even the stars, Sink heard Artosh’s answer.

----Know your place foolish bunch of garbage. Struggle. Stagger.

----Know in your end that worms which crawls on the ground it doesn't matter how much they gather together they cannot reach the heavens.

...After stopping and holding on to her reason that even now seemed to be being blown away, Sink clenched her teeth and thought.

Is there a way to offset this power; even understanding it is impossible. Recognize it. This is reality.

Then, this power that is swirling----after this, what will become of it?

The clashing vortex of power from different dimensions. Even the breeze it produces, was a power that would volatilize even someone who possessed the Elemental Circuit Connection Nerve----a power that didn't reach the understanding, basing on the law of energy flow, the result was only one.

The vortex will eventually converge, diffuse, and radiate----"to all directions".

"Notify all ships! All casters and all hands----deploy Kuurianse [Eternal Fourth Divine Protection]!! Hurry up!!"

An outcry flew with Sink's command, but Sink knew----that it was useless.

Twenty five years ago, the defensive spell deployed by three thousand people didn't block even the [Air Strike] of a single Flügel.

After having received that Sink compiled the defense----no, [Kuurianse] was a sealing spell.

If the spell deployed is the same divine protection from the Old Deus Cainasu then, now it'll block the [Air Strike].

She had pride in that certainty. But----she smiled bitterly while looking at the vortex in front of her eyes.

(Against this, does it at least have the meaning of a single piece of paper, even that is dubious...)

The convergence of this power, the area of influence of the diffusion and irradiation is----impossible to measure.

But if you consider the area of effect of one shot of [Arka-shi-ase] then, until a certain point it can be imagined.

If you estimate extremely optimistically----it will be more than half of this continent. Everything under that area, will die.

This land which almost every race are gathered----with the possible exception being Artosh, it will all be eradicated.

"----[Great War]...[Star Grail]...[Old Deus]----[Essence]..."

----"Don't doubt", "don't think"----that's right, the thoughts that remained somewhere subconsciously, were blown away in the face of the rampaging view that announced the world's demise, and now it showed up clearly.

Old Deus Cainasu...the creator of the Elfs, the Forest God----the concept of "Nature".

Old Deus----prayers, wishes, are the [Essence] that fills the "activation condition" ----in other words it's the concept that obtained "me".
(TL Note: That's not worded wrong. That's what it says. It'll only make sense later.)

("The concept that obtained me"...? Is that really a God? By [Essence]----"

Just what is it----the thought were continuing on like that, but----

(...Eh?)

The rampaging storm of extinction that reported the end of the world was---- abruptly, deviated.

The fabric that danced in mid-air wrapped around as if being washed away, and was flowing to the southwest direction.

It divided the continent, and while everyone was dazed at the power outside logic that was "being mowed down", only Sink followed it.

Octo-Caster, what she saw after deploying all of it at the same time in the very far-away horizon was----

“...Ex-Machina.....? Why----“

And then at the destination of the light that would end the world, that divided the continent like waving a curtain.

Thousands of Ex-Machinas were engulfed by it and disappeared----Sink Nirvalein, certainly saw that.

In a moment----the thought that crossed her mind----it can’t be.

It can’t be it can’t be it can’t be----By making full use of too many detailed spells that burned through the Elemental Circuit Connection Nerve.

Sink searched for a certain something, and then finally----she found out two figures.

What that meant----was in other words. It was “just as planned” until the very, very end----

She murmured, towards the existence that made she move, with a violent smile that showed up killing intent.

“----...So it was you~, who was the [Ghost]-san right~...Wolf-san?”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The view that was like the collapse of the heavens and earth could be seen in the horizon, from above a hill very far away.

“----Report from the Zweihen [Examination Unit]----The reproduction of the design succeeded with <<72.8%>> of the output----Now Synchronizing.

One female machine of the Ex-Machinas----said that to Riku, and held up her arm.

“<Lossen>----Org.0000----Stale-Mater[True Epigraphy – Star Killer]----it's entrusted to you.”

----The thing that was born from the void, was a gun that was stuck in the ground, just like a small tower.

The vortex of violence that seemed like it would be ending the world, that was seen just a little ago.

Namely----all energy of the collision of [Divine Strike], [Arka-shi-anse], [Zuibaku] and [Far Cry].

That thing that recreated “more than a seventh” of that----if it was Riku alone...no, it didn’t matter how many of him there was he couldn’t hold it, it had many times his height, it was too much gigantic to be called a gun----it was like a [Pile].

The mouth of the cannon pierced the ground, and the [Gun] that stood by itself, was just silently waiting for the trigger to be pulled.

In other words----when the [Signal] come----it will be pulled by Riku.

The Ex-Machina said towards Riku, whose black eyes didn’t reflect anything, and was just wordlessly and expressionlessly gazing at that.

“<Report>With this then this machine too will head to the battlefront----“

The Ex-Machina who said that and was about to leave, was stopped by Riku’s question.

“With that just now...for the sake of constructing this, how many tools (Ex-Machinas) were...broken?”

“----<Answer>From the eleven [clusters] that charged in, five machine are left, so four thousand eight hundred and two machines were annihilated.”

“...Five units remained huh.”

“<Affirmation>Are there any other questions?”

“It’s more of a confirmation than a question but...I’ll wait until your guys peel off Artosh’s [essence], after that I’ll pull this thing’s trigger, and pierce the core of the star----and then the [Star Grail] will manifest----is that all?”

“--------<Affirmation>Artosh too, no one will die. It won’t conflict with the <Rules>.”

Closing the eyes that were like darkness, Riku clenched the ring ShuVi entrusted and recalled.

----What, it’s a easy, talk...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“Reporting with frankness----there was a error in the calculations of Player [Legacy Unit] ShuVi.”

What the Ex-Machina who called himself Eintihi talked about in Riku’s hideout, was this----

Even with thirty-two [Eensweg] lined up “converging” it----was impossible.

“To induce downwards all attacks from all camps through the [Eensweg], they won’t make it within the difference of “10^-609 milliseconds”, and the power will collide and swirl. To grant it directivity and make it converge after that was----impossible.”

What came up in ShuVi’s plan, that was hazy even for the silent Nirvana, was a too much microscopic “error”.

That----was the conclusion given by the Ex-Machinas who computed alongside multiples clusters.

At those words Riku hid his eyes and smiled bitterly. So even if everything went well----they would still fail.

But----towards such Riku, Eintihi continued.

“With the thirty-two [Eensweg] set by the Player [Legacy Unit]----it’s possible to “deflect” it.”

“...And what’s with that?”

“Originally, the swirling power that collided would converge, and after that it would diffuse to all directions. But since the thirty-two [Eensweg] that she tried to set up stopped at twenty-four----there’s a hole in the southwest direction.

----In other words, Riku answered, by reading ahead.

“To make all the power that collided, not go downwards----but it’s possible to induce it to southwest, you say?”

Giving one nod----Eintihi continued.

“Accompanying it and sharing information----“

That was strictly as a tool.

“First, the Ex-Machinas possesses Himea-Pocrifen [False Epigraphy – Air Strike]----it’s an armament that imitates the [Air Strike].”

It’s nothing but information that the observer caught.

“Second, this is something that the Player [Legacy Unit] also understood but, if the star is pierced and the released power makes the [Star Grail] materialize, then with a probability of 52%----it will appear in the hands of the Artosh (War God). He possesses just that much of [Essence].”

After being told that Riku once again thought----just what, exactly, is [Essence].

But Eintihi looked away from that Riku, and continued.

“Using the above as the base, Willer [One with Will].Correct the strategy----give the order.”

That’s right, they are machines. They are just tools. Giving them orders----giving them the decision----is the will of Riku (the user)

“----Then, it’s a simple talk. Let’s feign the preemptive strike from the Artosh Camp.”

Cutting off his thoughts, and gazing at the strategy map with eyes that didn’t reflect light, Riku continued.

Indifferently, calmly, coldly, calculative----and thoroughly.

“Launch[Air Strikes] in the coalition from behind the Avant-Heim without killing

anyone. With just this that Elf (Sink Nirvalein) will move----after that they will do the full fire power collision by themselves. After you deflect that to the southwest, this----“

The hand that lined up the pieces in the game board (map), seemed to be about to stop for a moment----but, it continued.

“Imitate-replicate an armament that converges----if it’s the Ex-Machinas then it can be constructed right?”

“Affirmation. From the thirty-two [clusters], if eleven charges in, at the very worst it will possible to replicate 70%.”

---Putting his hand on the chest as if he was grabbing the key that was giving a crushing sound, Riku continued.

“And so, will it be sufficient to pierce the core of the star and materialize the [Star Grail]?”

“Affirmation. Four thousand eight hundred and seven machines will be lost, the core will be pierced if you fire it after converging a seventh of the output, as the result it’ll make the power flow source of the elemental circuit collapse----and then it’ll occur the spouting reaching the necessary value to materialize the [Star Grail].”

----In other words it was to watch die, almost five thousand people----brethren, of ShuVi----of his wife----

As if to shake off that thought that crossed his mind, Riku once again chanted as if turning around in his chest.

----Put up the [Key]. And then say as if telling it to yourself.

“The breaking of a tool isn’t included in the [Rules]----it’s just like I threw away an arm.”

“Affirmative.”

----And then, Riku asked the last question.

“Is it possible to incapacitate without killing Artosh with the twenty-one [Clusters] remaining?”

“----Affirmation.”

.....

“----[Divine Strike] is a single attack that bundles together Artosh’s power and the [Air Strike] of all Flügels. The Flügels becomes incapacitated and Artosh too becomes weakened. We’ll pick that opening and “peel off”----Artosh’s [Essence].”

“.....”

“An Old Deus after having its essence peeled off, will probably be “inactivated” for one hundred years. After that if the power flow source of the elemental circuit gets pierced----certainly the [Star Grail] will surely materialize in the hands of the Willer [One with Will].”

At those words Riku hid his face and smiled bitterly----this guy, he’s really clumsy right.

Almost, like her (ShuVi).

If you’re going to pretend to be a heartless machine then----notice that words like certainly, probably, surely, isn’t like a machine (Ex-Machina) at all.

“We are heartless machines, just tools, so commands will just be faithfully obeyed and executed----therefore.”

And then, as a fundamentally talk you see----like that Riku hid his eyes.

“When you see “the light of the peeled off essence” of Artosh just pull the trigger without hesitation and obtain the [Star Grail].”

----A machine, you know...when it tells a lie, it doesn’t avert its eyes...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The Ex-Machina girl made a bow to Riku, who finished recollecting, and said.

“<Report>Well then, I----this machine too will head to the battlefront. Willer Riku----“

----And then until the very end, those guys who self-proclaimed themselves as just machines.

Left behind a line that they didn't even notice they weren't used to it,

"----I pray, for your fortune..."

And then it leaped away.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

<----From Eitihi[Commander of All Connected Units] to---->

<Julius / Karfma / Luis / Marta / Nolto / Otto / Econ / Paula / Cuvre / Rihalat / Samuel / Shulle / Estze / Theodor / Ullyhi / Yuber / Vil / Viem / Ikusati / Ipsilon / Tzaharia---to the remaining [All Clusters]'s all nine thousand one hundred and seventy-seven machines.>

<----Befehl ist nun Ein. By betting this soul gifted to us by Player[Legacy Unit] ShuVi, we will assist Willer Riku----namely. The retirement of Old Deus Artosh's [Essence]. Ignore the damage of a universal annihilation but without accomplishing a suicide... Incidentally I'll finish the command by adding a remark that's unbefitting of an Ex-Machina---->
(TL Note: "Befehl ist nun Ein" is german for "The command/order is only One".)

<----Lived without life, went without life----we depart with life----Aus>

<<<JAWOHL----!!>>>

Eintihi snorted in a way unbefitting of a Ex-Machina and apologized for the [lie].

Forgive me Willer. Having the Flügels, Avant-Heim (Phantasma), and a Old Deus as the opponent after the [Divine Strike].

To peel off Artosh's [Essence] without killing anyone is impossible----even subjugating seems extremely difficult.

Please----I wish that you think like this. The heartless tools ran out of control by themselves.

“All machines, authority for armaments’ use, restriction released----!”

[[----<Lossen>...Einde-Pocrifen [False Epigraphy – True Dragon Roar]----!!!]]

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“----Don’t, underestimate us-nya----scrapsssss!!”

Continuing through the passage in the area of Artosh’s throne until the prisoner’s base, Azriel shouted.

The countless blades of light released by squeezing out the little amount of power left dyed the red sky in white, and caught up many enemy figures.

Barely visualizing, the multiples Ex-Machinas that released a blue light and exploded.

----A [Divine Strike]----of the greatest output.

This is its after-effect. Almost every Flügel lost their power, and there were ones who couldn’t even move.

As if targeting that----no, with a timing that was definitely targeting that.

A legion of machines surged through, seemingly to completely cover the sky.

What approached was the entire army, which with only a fourth of its power, slaughtered Aranreiv, one of the <Kings> of the Draconia.

The few ones that has a minor amount of power left from the entire units are, Azriel and one part of the Flügels.

And the attacks of the Avant-Heim only, they were received and shot with those but----there’s a limit.

The anti-air artillery is steadily shooting down the Ex-Machinas.

But, the legion of machines assaulted, seemingly to not even care about the damages.

----That’s probably what Jibril said too, an armament that imitates Aranreiv’s [Far

Cry].

With each one of those simultaneous sweep----the few Flügels that has power left to fight gets instantly blown away.

The ones that can't move----namely the ones that they conclude that can't become an obstacle, they don't even turn towards them.

Rather than that, what are they planning.

Even the coalition fleet that considered this to be a opportunity and went to the offensive, suffered attacks of the Ex-Machinas.

They clearly, don't want to kill. They are only stealing the fleet's battle capacity.

----[Don't resist. We don't want to kill as much as possible.]----

As if saying that, the swarm of machines tried to pass through and get besides Artosh's knee.

"...Are----you, screwing up-nya...bunch of garbage-nya----!!"

She knew where they were heading to.

Straight----to the area imposed by Artosh-sama's throne.

"Obediently, let, the Lord be killed----are you saying something like that-nya your scraaap!"

The light halo of Azriel who shouted that, irregularly distorted and collapsed.

The approaching swarm of Ex-Machinas----she held up her hand towards the space in front of her,

"Our (Flügels)'s attacks are just the [Air Strike]----are you thinking that we are idiots that only remember a single thing-nya!"

In a moment, the space in front of her burst.

She made an application of the Flügels' [Shift]----working on the space.

The space that had a hole forcefully opened, it's swing-back twisted it forward, breaking everything.

The space twisted, distorted, and all scraps in its area of effect turned into broken pieces.

----In that attack just how many dozens of units were engulfed in it….but, that was the limit.

“----Haa...haaa...haa...!”

Leaning her back on the door that continued to the throne, Azriel too, just like Jibril.

Overused her power, turned into a child-like form, and breathed roughly.

----Even so I won’t let anyone go beyond this, Azriel glared to the front but, to her ears.

A despairing-like voice flew.

“----From the Proofer [Analysis Unit] to the Bepher [Command Unit]...the principles of the [Shift] from the Flügels----Analysis Complete.”

“--------!!!”

So having the color drained from the face was about this huh. Azriel noticed her own mistake far too late.

The Ex-Machinas----analyzes, and create an equipment that imitates the “attack” they received.

Because of the self-working, the [Shift] couldn’t be analyzed until today----but now it was used as an attack.

As for what that meant----was affirmed by the following sound of communication.

“----From the Zweihen [Examination Unit] to the remaining machines----Shura-Pocrifen[False Epigraphy – Heavenly Shift]’s Designation Completed, Sharing.”

At the same time on Azriel’s back----a flash of light passed through and shot

down the door leading to the area of the throne,

“Targeted point visualized. Sharing to all machines----the neutralization of the enemy has already been done with so----teleport there.”

“Shi----!”

“----<Lossen>----Shura-Pocrifen[False Epigraphy – Heavenly Shift]!”

Without giving Azriel even time to regret the mistake, the Ex-Machina who said that, disappeared from the view.

Let alone flying, but even just walking already seemed impossible to Azriel, but even so.

As if crawling, towards the shot-down door...she headed towards her Lord----

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Sure enough, what welcomed Eintihi who teleported to the objective point was, a gigantic build.

It was the first time he was visualized----to be correct, in the past there were no machines that visualized it and shared the data in time.

Therefore comparison is impossible. But they know even without comparing. The overwhelming sense of existence of thatwhich is seating on the throne.

That which was, in this situation----irreverently, arrogantly, naturally, supporting his cheek with a ferocious pair of golden-eyes.

It all announced that it was the strongest, War God, also the objective----[Old Deus Artosh].

Before Eintihi, followed by one machine, and then another, and so on the swarm of Ex-Machinas kept increasing as they teleported----

“----I allow it. You may name yourself.”

Artosh asked, and with one sentence the space swayed, and all observation devices suffered variations.

“<Denial>Tools doesn’t name themselves.”

With Eintihi’s answer, [fool], Artosh laughed like that and the time screeched.

“What is there in asking for the name of a tool (arm). I ask for the name of the[Enemy] of mine.”

“----------“

Eintihi doesn’t answer. From the beginning there’s no way he could answer.

Being quiet, only understanding the war situation, and then waiting for the arrival of the machines able to battle.

The remaining war potential----eight hundred seventy-two machines----the machines which the Shura-Pocrifen [False Epigraphy – Heavenly Shift] could be shared with from those were seven hundred and one machine.

In other words even if all machines arrives the greatest war potential was seven hundred and one machine----it didn’t fill two of the original [clusters].

To think that just the exhausted Flügels, and one Phantasma would erase this much----Eintihi smiled bitterly.

It’s just as Willer pointed out, mathematics is a tool too incomplete, though a machinery recognizing it is an ironic talk.

While thinking that Eintihi continued wordless, but Artosh,

“Hm, affirmative. That’s fine.”

More like, his smile deepened.

“The opponent of the thunderous strongest of the world for three thousand years, is the weakest neglected by everything of the world----that’s what is natural.”

And then, he stopped supporting his cheek----

“I was tired of waiting----soldier who is becoming the [Enemy] of mine.”

Artosh stood up, from the throne. Just only that----

<From Eintihi to all remaining machines...is this a irregularity of this machine?>

The observation devices of a Ex-Machina, all of them----showed Artosh's "mass enhancement".

Wrong, that too is not correct. There's no problem optically, the man in front of them just stood up.

----Correction. The amount of energy he was wearing increased----once again correction. Not energy, what increased was clearly the information of his existence itself. It was as if something that didn't exist was trying to exist.

But the seven hundred and one machines that at long last gathered in the area of the throne, all of those machines answered.

----<Nein>, they said. All machines observed the same thing.
(TL Note: Nein is the german for "no".)

It can't be true. It's going against any and all thermodynamic laws. Magic is, the operation of elements is nothing more than distorting the physical laws from within the range of energy exchange. It's not a talk that needs to stick with an explanation.

But----any and all sensors from all machines just, gave out the same conclusion----in other words.

The mass is increasing----the concept that engulfed the world, the heavens, and the earth, was once again appearing and taking form.

<It can't be true----what is happening...!>

Right after Artosh used the [Divine Strike]----for an ordinary time he should've remained with less than 12% of his power.

All Zeas [Observation Units] and Proofers [Analysis Unit] are calculating it as a consensus----even so.

Artosh said, as if reading that thought----or maybe he really read the thoughts of the machines.

"----The strongest is the strongest and therefore he is the strongest. What

meaning is there in the increase or decrease of power?”

--------,

Eintihi honestly recognized, I see now.

It’s completely illogical but, as a machine who now obtained feelings, against that he answered “affirmative”.

----The concept of [Strongest]. If that’s how it is, the machine who obtained a [Heart] thought.

By assuming that a similar working was its working, a single hypothesis was derived from it.

That was, something that had gone unclear for a long time.

<The “concept” that obtained “me”. That’s----isn't it a law that possessed a will?>

In other words a [Essence] is----

“It’s not something to care about. The strong is myself, the weak is everything else besides myself.”

Against the Artosh [Strongest] who said that ferociously, but while slightly snorting, Eintihi replied by smiling bitterly.

<All machines. The machines which the thoughts are being shared with, if you somehow survive then investigate again this hypothesis.>

<Jawohl.>

If the [Essence] is just like this hypothesis then, the subjugation of Artosh (the concept in front of his eyes)----is theoretically impossible.

But---Eintihi asked.

<To all remaining Zeas [Observation Unit] and Proofers [Analysis Unit]----does the [Essence] “exist physically, and its confirmation is possible”?>

<<<----Bejahend.>>>
(TL Note: “Bejahend” is the german for affirmation/affirmative.)

Then----there are no circumstances.

“All machines, what the Player [Legacy Unit] compiled, Versus Unknown Combat Algorithm----<Lossen>----!”

The giant in front of the eyes that even now continued its mass enhancement----concept----phenomena, or is it a law perhaps.

Before the righteous God that seemed like he would increase until he covered the heavens and earth, Eintihi let out his voice and ordered.

At the current point it’s nothing but an hypothesis. Calculating the battle potential of the enemy is impossible.

Then what should be done----we should move just like the soul [Heart] we obtained orders.

In other words----if the enemy is unknown then, assume everything that couldn’t be assumed.

Don’t try to understand don’t try to calculate----what should be trusted until the end is the sensation alone----isn’t that right, Player [Legacy Unit].

----Inside Avant-Heim, the Area of the Throne.

Before the “God”, the seven hundred and one----machines talked, the ones with life screamed.

<[Objective, Artosh Essence]----change phenomena within milliseconds, assume that even the conversion of law is possible---->

----Then.

<Meanwhile, react as much as possible to every half second----I ask of you machines. Is it impossible for us (Ex-Machinas)?>

<<<DENIAL!!>>>

That’s right----no matter what existence it is----no matter what thing (concept) it is.

<If it's harmful (exists) then we will correspond (destroy)----that is us (Ex-Machinas). I wish the best of luck to you machines, Aus!!>

<<<JAWOHL!!>>>

Towards the [Enemy (God)] that even now was enlarging and materializing, all machines took cooperation and shouted all at once.

"----<Lossen>----!!!"

And then, looking with anticipation at the swarm of Ex-Machinas attacking----

Artosh just----declared, with a voice that seemed to echoes until the continent.

"Now, this [Essence] of mine----you may show the world the quintessence of war, oh beloved [Natural Enemy (Weakest)] of mine----!!"

----…

--------…….

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Riku thought, while holding the [Stale-Mater] entrusted by the Ex-Machinas.

----Just what I, am doing in this place I wonder.

A game which the defeat is certain, and by throwing mud in it everything got ruined----

"----Shut up. Not yet. Don't think yet."

Saying that as if convincing himself, he verified the [Key] of the heart that seemed to be coming out.

----No problem. The [Key] is still turned. Still, still, can keep going...

The Avant-Heim that could be seen faintly in the far, far away distance.

In that place, the tools (Ex-Machinas), are operating to peel off Artosh's essence without killing anyone.

I’m waiting for the [Signal]----just, it’ll be fine if I just pull this trigger----

And then----suddenly, a voice----no, a “severe earthquake” that seemed to make the star sway ran through.

Heaven, Earth, everything in the universe----listen, that “voice” which ordered that spoke.

The very definition of a God----with a echo so absolutely that was just like the strongest Old Deus,

So this is defeat----I see now. It was a entertaining play (war) that made the heart boil up.

You are listening right, it declared, as if confirming.

Oh weakest without a name----you may be proud. You rightfully, became the “enemy” of mine (the strongest).

--------And then.

Riku turned one of the eyes that were like the night towards the horizon----it reflected the white light that filled the red sky.

He thought without any deep emotions----it was the same view as Eintihi said.

In other words it was the [Signal] that Old Deus Artosh’s essence was peeled off with success.

----That’s how, it’s being...made to be.

“...”

In truth he knows----but, it was a fact that he had to make it be like he didn’t know.

Riku just shook his head alone----and put the finger, on the [Stale-Mater]’s trigger.

Not even a single Ex-Machina came back...without noticing even that meaning----no.

----He kept feigning that he didn’t notice.

Probably, it was because he could guess that even for Artosh.

It must be because he didn’t say a single word about “was shot down”----

“...Hold on, somehow, ok...”

He verified the [Key] of the heart that even now seemed to be about to break.

Riku, once again thought back, on the <Rules> Riku himself had decided upon.

----First, No one should be killed.

----Second, No one should be allowed to die.

----Third, No one must be perceived.

----Fourth, No matter the method it’s not illegal.

...That’s right, those rules had a missing hole.

Not recognizing ShuVi----the Ex-Machinas as “life”, and count them as a tool.

If the [no matter the illegal method] performed by the tools (Ex-Machinas) isn’t perceived----

If he even acts like he didn’t notice----the <Rules> won’t be violated at all.

Riku smiled bitterly and thought----really the sophistry and the fraud too, their extremes intersect here.

ShuVi who didn’t spoke anything but logic----the Ex-Machinas----spoke about sophistry.

If he perceives that meaning, there’s no way, he could deny it.

That is, the wish from ShuVi’s [Heart].

They let go of each other’s hands----the overwhelming back foot of certain defeat born from that miss----so at the very least.

----Even if it doesn't reach the Check-Mate [Perfect Victory].

----Bring it up to the last hand, a stale-mate[Draw].

Therefore the Ex-Machinas, named like this, the last hand that will pierce the star, and destroy the game board.

----Stale-Mater [True Epigraphy – Star Killer]----.

"Well then----with this it's a draw (Game-Over)...sorry about that, Gods----"

Letting that out, with the finger on the trigger of the giant gun that was like a stake stabbed on the ground----

At the instant----that Riku pulled it----

The stake that overcame Riku's height by far, the heavens and earth and dawn----everything of that got sucked up.

He felt the fierce power being allowed to flow----instantly, the mouth of the gun stabbed in the ground, spelled out light.

A seventh, of the power that burned through the continent, and charred out the star.

It pierced the core of the star, and it kept reaching until it destroyed the elemental circuit.

----By Riku's recognition it was a happening of a single instant.

But at the same time----Riku felt the [Key] of his heart too, being blown away----

"...What was, that, about a stale-mate crap...where----about this is a draw----!"

Literally, as if it was coming out.

With eyes whose light came back, Riku once again threw up all the feelings that were locked inside.

With the [Key] broken, the heart----can't stop anymore.

----Just exactly, how many died.

ShuVi's companions. Those guys who have life. The Flügels----just how many of them died!!!

Tricking up even him himself----putting behind even ShuVi's feelings!

The last sacrifice, for the sake of ending the war that continued to endlessly give out sacrifices----

Even killing intent was born towards himself who even after reaching this place, still continued to make those excuses.

----What's this about a stale-mate (draw).

You are just a trashy bastard, just a loser.

Even if it was ShuVi's wish or something else, and even if you put a reason on it!!

You! Disgracefully! Lost you know----Riku!!

.....

"Hey, ShuVi----What was lacking, I wonder...hey."

...Yeah. I know it, without even need to ask...

"Hey, ShuVi---if I and you, were the two as one, you see..."

...Yeah. The next time I definitely want to win ShuVi, with you, the two of us...

This time definitely, no one will die, they won't need to die----with such, a game----

Rolling up even up to the crust----the pierced core of the star----the power flow source of the elemental circuit was throwing up.

Something like the enormous----power that was released just now, seemed to be nothing more than a single pick of a needle.

The power that constitute the world----amount of power sufficient to blow it away without a trace---- was being released.

While Riku was being, swallowed by that power----he saw.

“.....Th...at, is...?”

----[Star Grail]...

----A polyhedron that showed up a pentagram, a star-shaped dodecahedral, that seemed to be like light.
(TL Note: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodecahedron.)

It will materialize on the place where all the released power converges----I see now.

So it really appears before the “winner”----but even if the hand is stretched----it won’t reach.

Dropping his gaze, he smiled bitterly.

“...I see now, like this, I can’t reach it right...”

Since the remaining right arm too disappeared, he can’t reach.

Much less since----he himself, isn’t the “winner”----

Having the body being swallowed by the light the elemental circuit who released a tremendous power, it started collapsing...and his strength was leaving the body.

----Since when was it I wonder.

Suddenly, at this point, without being embarrassed or worrying about appearances, he noticed that tears were flowing out.

The man with wet bandages and without arms, was crying out like a brat while collapsing----

“...Haha...it’s really----disgraceful right, I...”

Since it came to this then I wanted to at least, live coolly and die coolly though.



On the end, it was a life which I couldn't "win" even once.

A comical death befitting of a loser----at this point, there's no need for shame or appearances.

"Hey, ShuVi----I'm, dripping with regrets you know...I'm sorry, for being such a worthless husband."

What passed through his mind was----just only many countless regrets.

The faces of the ones that until now he watched dying, one by one they passed through.

The faces of the one hundred seventy-seven [ghosts] that went along with his own selfishness too.

He noticed a sense of guilty that seemed to crush him, but above that, the greatest regret.

----Amazing back even himself, it was so uncool that he even let out a laugh.

"Aah damn it...really even if I had to prostrate to Coron, I wanted to embrace you ShuVi."

Riku – virgin – twenty years. While being a married man, will die still as a virgin.

Hmm, in a certain way isn't that quite cool by itself!?

"No, no way after all...I can't act strong with that...haha..."

----It seems like until the very end, I will die disgracefully.

Then, until the end----let's be thorough.

Thoroughly disgraceful----let's depend on "God (outside force)".

"...Hey, if God is born from thoughts then----God of Games."

----With what isn't there anymore, those both arms,

"This life was like trash but, I'll offer everything, and for the first time since I was born I'll "pray"----please."

If it's too dirty, for someone who's just a loser to steal the Holy Grail (victory prize) then.

If I'm too drenched in blood to obtain the Throne of Sole God then.

----Please. I beg you.

At least say that there was any meaning for "us (the heart)".

It's fine if it's not me. Anyone is fine, anyone is fine so----

To anyone, who can end this war----

Give that----the [Star Grail]----to...some.....one.....

.....That's right, while the consciousness was disappearing,

" sigh..."

----Riku laughed, towards the figure that was approaching the [Star Grail].

The figure who approached the [Star Grail] in the middle of the light, was someone that no one until now ever saw.

With a big hat covering the head, on both eyes were diamond and spade. It was a young boy never seen before----but.

For Riku, he knew, who that was.

It was the one who, always----always always always, made him lose, until he became fed up----

It was because he always saw him in the depths of the darkness, showing up a fearless smile.

“...Hah...hahahaha----ahhahahahahaha!!”

----What, as expected, there was one, didn’t it...you...

“Hey----let’s play game again...definitely this time, I’ll show you that I’ll win, you see...”

----Together with ShuVi...defi,nite.....ly...

.....

Leaving those words, behind----towards Riku who was disappearing swallowed by the light.

Riku and ShuVi, born from and believed in by just those two----the weakest and the last Old Deus.

As if bearing with something, he forced himself to create one, and shot out a smile in return.

Then slowly...held over the [Star Grail] with his hand, and then----------.....

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

That view, everyone in the world witnessed.

Therefore, that was, one of the very few things of this history, that was left recorded as a historical fact...

----First, light engulfed the world.

The light that expanded in the far away horizon, covered the red heaven and dyed even the land in white, and stole the boundary of heaven and earth.

When the light that expanded soundlessly stopped----the world, had lost its color.

Everyone felt troubled in differentiating the heaven from earth, and then, in the space of one beat they noticed.

The ash that danced in the sky stopped in space, the fires of war forgot to flicker, and any and all things stopped.

----Even the time. Everything, besides those who possessed life.

While being silenced by that view, leaving behind the life and the living ones, in the space of many instants.

----A impact engulfed the world.

It was clearly different from destruction----a gentle power passed through as if licking the world.

At the same time, the ones who looked up to the sky----opened their eyes.

A view that missed the normal course----all living things, and races just gazed at that while still not understanding it.

----Only.

One hundred [ghosts] and, a single human looked at it with understanding...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

--------.....

A [Ghost] who once had a name, and due to contamination from elemental bones leaned his body on a rock.

“...You really, did it right...General...”

He looked at the sky with his barely remaining vision----the dust that covered the red heaven----

As if rolling along with the wing, he saw it being scattered like a joke and disappearing.

--------.....

Similarly a [Ghost] who once had a name, that was bitten by a Dhampir and got sick.

“...Haha...that bastard----he seriously did it...!”

While burning out his body by bathing in the light for the first time----the mountains that were thoroughly destroyed and devastated----

Rewinded just like a magic trick, and he felt it being grouped into the shape it should be.

--------.....

The one hundred seventy-seven [Ghosts], in their respective places, with their respective bodies.

They understood what happened, and looked thoughtfully with emotions in their chests.

It’s impossible to oppose, an absolute order, which all things in creation responded to----

----The world. The appearance of it being recreated.

Humans can’t even sense magic but, even so there was confidence.

Why is it they didn’t know----but.

The war----the long eternal great war, ended now with this.

With that confidence, thoughtfully holding emotions in their chests----let out laughs from the depths of their [Hearts].

--------.....

Lastly----the single person besides the [Ghosts], the one that gazed at that with understanding.

Russia Continent, in the sleeping room of Riku and ShuVi, a face peeked from the window.

“...You really...obtained the [Star Grail] right...everyone.”

----Before she noticed, the ash stopped falling.

Coron who looked above to see the heaven, knew that the fairytale that covered the sky was true.

And then, for the first time----

----She saw, the sun.

“...As expected----of my proud little, brother...and, little...sister...”

She closed her eyelids, and even now the brightly stabbing sunshine made her eyes hurt. It sure must be it.

Riku, ShuVi, everyone is----

Her proud, proud----little brother and sister----those two.

Really.

----Really----did it.

They ended, the eternal war.

As the older sister, as the, Onee-chan...more than anyone else----

Felt pride----

“...AH----UWA...WAAAAAAAAAAAH!!”

As expected, it’s impossible----I...you see...!

“Hey Riku, ShuVi, as expect Onee-chan can’t be satisfied with thisssss!”

Since----those two, they broke...their promises with Onee-chan you know!!?

“Even though, I----said that I don’t want to lose my family, anymore...why, is, it----!!”

Bursting into tears at that injustice, Coron shouted the names of her little brother and sister.

----Why is it, that it wouldn’t work if it wasn’t those two.

----Why it wouldn't work if it was me? Why is it that I can’t do anything.

I see, the eternal great war ended with this.

But in exchange for that----Coron lost, the ones who were more important to her than anyone else----her little brother and, the little sister that he loved.

And then, just what, was left for me----!?

“This, is too...much...why everyone, go on and leave me behind...”

----[Hey----Coron Dora]

Suddenly...the last conversation exchanged with Riku----crossed through her brain.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Coron said, towards Riku’s words who visited Coron along with Eintihi----a Ex-Machina.

“----Stop.”

With black eyes just like darkness, which she thought she would never see again.

The little brother Riku who had eyes that didn’t reflect light----continued without caring about it----

“If, everything goes well and end----“

“----I’m saying...to stop aren’t I?!”

Coron shouted hysterically and stopped, Riku’s words.

“Even though----you not even once, called me by the full name!! Why now----!”

Coron----Coron Dora screamed with teary eyes, but.

“If everything goes well, I’m sure you will understand. And then----“

With eyes still black, but----Riku continued with a smile that seemed to be supplicating.

“In the chess board on the table, could you move----the White Rook to the [6 of E]?”

“...Something, like that----do it, yourself...”

Gripping her fists, Coron Dora said as if squeezing it out.

----The truth is, she already know.

They didn’t had relationship, so shallow, that she couldn’t even absorb the meaning of those words.

Even though it was something she herself said----even so they are “family”.

It wasn’t a shallow relationship----it definitely wasn’t.

But, even so, exactly because of that----she couldn’t say.

The single line “don’t go”----because, Riku is...Riku and ShuVi is----

Riku turned away his gaze from Coron, distantly----and turned his eyes towards the table on the room, to the empty seat.

He narrowed his eyes, and looked at something that doesn’t seemed to be here, and let out as if praying.

“...Hey God. If you aren’t my delusion, but really is there then.”

--------.

“...Could you remember that there was a helpless idiot, that tried to get rid of the war with a game?”

And then he turned to Coron who remained wordless even now,

“...Coron Dora...no----“

Towards Coron who remained with her face hidden, Riku----put the baggage on his back,

“Nee-san...thank you, for everything until now. So---“

Leaved the room, and left behind the last words----

“I’ll leave the humans, the “next”, the “after”...to you. If it’s Nee-san, I can believe.”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

While her face broke up into tears, Coron moved towards the table as if crawling.

And then----Just like Riku’s [Testament], she put the piece, and let out.

“...Check...mate...right. Riku...”

Wiping the tears with the sleeve, Coron stood up.

----What she was entrusted with…there are a lot of things that must be done, she thought.

She doesn’t have the leisure, to be crying anymore, she thought.

Also for the sake of not letting what Riku and the others created go to waste----

First is Riku and ShuVi...all the basis that them, that the [Ghosts] existed in this world.

All of the records and notes, and scrolls----it must be burned no matter what.

All of the records of the secret maneuvers, it must be erased without letting a single one left.

Not changing even in the world from now----not concerning anyone.

For the sake of making them think that it’s insignificant and weak.

----For the sake of the “next”. And then for the sake of the “after”.

Looking down on the blue stone that had the name of the three engraved, Coron let out.

“Hey Riku, ShuVi...you two are really incredible...you understand?"

----Certainly Riku set up this [Game].

From the point that ShuVi and Riku died, by looking from the side it was a draw.

The objective was completed but, it was because he lost in the [Game].

“But, as expected Onee-chan thinks...you two, are unbelievable incredible.”

----They challenged the Gods, the world.

Without being perceived not even once.

Without leaving behind even a single one of those traces.

They ended the great war that continued for the eternity----in only two years.

Not remaining on memories nor records, not even becoming a legend.

Spinning up a myth that definitely won’t be sung...for the sake of the “next”.

Is that defeat? Coron absolutely didn’t thought that.

If this isn’t a feat, a big victory, then what is it.

“...But, how weird...I wonder why.....”

Even though I think it’s too late for it----could it be.

Could this really be, the feeling that Riku felt all this time, she wondered.

“...Why, is it this frustrating...I wonder...!”

I already decided that I wouldn’t cry anymore----that’s why.



Just, as if leaning on the wall, Coron departed, covering her face.

--------.....

“----It’s because, the game hasn’t ended.”

In the empty room where Coron departed from.

----Since when, a young boy wearing hat as big as a visor on the head stood there.

At his side was a star-shaped dodecahedral----letting the [Star Grail] drift, the young boy with a mischievous smile.

He walked and approached the chess board----and slowly, moved the Black Queen, and let out.

And then----corrected Coron’s misunderstanding.

“It’s not a Check-Mate----it’s Check, you know...but with this...”

That’s right, the young boy looked down on the board, and envisioned the hands which could be taken from now on.

He let out a smile, at how it didn’t matter how he moves the pieces----there won’t be any development besides the repetition of moves.

“So I was brought into a Perpetual Check...it’s the first time right, that you did a draw with me.”

So until the end, until the very end, he----didn’t gave up.

Even in an overwhelming back foot, at least just in this, I’ll bite off a good one on you----

----Hey----let’s play game again...definitely this time, I’ll show you that I’ll win, you see...

----Together with ShuVi...defi,nite.....ly...

Thinking back on that, the young boy----the Old Deus born from and believed in by only two people.

The one of that day which the young Riku, saw on the depths of the darkness, the Strongest Gamer that was above the imagination.

Showing up a fearless and insolent, and also----unyielding smile, he held up the [Star Grail].

----------.....

Any and all intelligent life form of this world, were created by the many Old Deus.

----The only...exception being the humans.

“Not being created by anyone, not being desired by anyone, not being wished by anyone. They are the single race which, just by their own will, from beasts they stood up with two legs, and reached up to obtain intelligence, so therefore----race without a name----humans.”

Only they, succeeded in ending the barren and purposeless war.

Even if that result ended up being thrown in mud----only they alone.

Can you talk about that, while saying that it’s the same level as just a beast?----Definitely not.

“That’s why I, as the Sole God will grant you guys a name----Immanity (Humanity Race)...[Immunity].”

They pile up learning, obtain tolerance, and definitely don’t stop resisting, not giving up even until the last one person.

Finally they made stop the war (sickness) of the foolish ones, who where all about the immunity system of the star itself.

The concept of evolution, the infinite possibilities----for the race which concealed

that in their bodies, it was a befitting name.

And then on, Tet continued on laughing.

“Well then----let’s continue the game.”

Keeping on being in a draw due to repetitive moves is also annoying so, just like they desired----

“One that everyone can enjoy, and no one will die, I’ll prepare such a game, and will be waiting ok.”

In this world----there’s no cycle of reincarnation.

Even so they kept believing in the “next” until the end----I’ll try believing in it too.

“Well----now then.”

Saying that the weakest, and the last Old Deus held up the [Star Grail].

And announced, with a voice that reached all things in the creation above and below the heavens.

Those of the Exceed [Sixteen Races] that proclaims to have intelligence----!

----And then this myth that will never be sung.

Now continues, carried onto the myth that’s now talked on----in other words.

Carrying on the Ashieit (The Rules of the Legacies),

Nothing of the Aschent (Agreement of the Sixteen Races),

Based on the Throne (Ashente) of Sole God it will be established the [Ten Oaths] .

Now look up and behold. Today, in this day, the world changed.

----Aschente<Swear upon the Oaths>----!!

Ending Talk

Without being noticed the sun was setting, and a pale light shined on the back alley of Elkia.

Towards Tet, who finished talking with distant eyes, Izuna opened her mouth once,

“...That story, until where it’s a lie, and until where it’s serious, desu?”

----With half-opened eyes, she “concluded” that there were lies.

Depending on the contents of the lie you won’t get away with it, to Izuna who glared like that while showing up tears, Tet laughed.

“Huh~? Why do you think that there are lies in it I wonder~?”

“Riku and, ShuVi…are a little similar, to Sora and Shiro, desu. Don’t treat me like a idiot, desu.”

While sipping her nose, even without using the special senses of the Warbeast, she knew that much.

Additionally----towards Izuna’s eyes that proclaimed that she knew she “was being teased”,

“Ahaha□ as expected you are sharp right, un un♪ it’s obvious that I adapted a few of it. Because----“

----And then, while continuing the game, talking until the sun set----

Tet who didn’t let Izuna win a single time, with a face that was like a child----

“If I really said everything it’ll stop being a “untold myth”, right□ ”

The existence that was in the furthest line from being childish----said that with a smiling face that was like of a child itself.

“...You, as expected I don’t like you, desu.”

Izuna glared at such Tet with steady eyes----but.

“...But you’re good at stroking so I’ll forgive you, desu.”

good girl *good girl* while being patted like that, after getting her neck stroked, she easily turned back on it.

For an instant while patting such Izuna, Tet thought with eyes that were as if he was the God of Affection.

This child is, Hatsuse Izuna is, young----and “fool”.

----“That’s exactly why”...she is wise, clever, and good at guessing.

Izuna’s words----[are a little similar]----he was impressed from the depths of his heart.

That’s right, Tet certainly, added some adaptations to the facts he knew.

But---the two who made him feel like creating, this <Disboard>.

Those two certainly are similar to [ ] but----it’s “just a little”.

It’s because those two, when compared to Sora and Shiro...to [ ], they are----

----Far stronger.

Those two went against the game that [ ] threw away.

The game known as the reality (world) without rules----it's because they challenged it----and earned a stale-mate (draw).

Even if the end, it was desperately thrown in mud.

It’s because for starters----a stale mate, is such a thing.

A stale-mate is, and a perpetual check is too.

From a back foot that was almost a certainly defeat----but even so without giving up, this serious blow was their single retribution.

But----even then...

“...For me it looked extremely brightly. So much that it made me want to believe in them, right♪”

“...? What are you talking about, desu?”

Towards Izuna who was purring while looking up and having her neck stroked, Tet returned a smile.

Sora and Shiro----[　] is...they are exactly what they wished for----two as one.

Really, will they be able to go to the place those two couldn’t reach, I wonder.

Will they come to make him lose just like they proclaimed, I wonder.

Or maybe...surprisingly----...? Haha□

Towards Tet who was indulging in such thoughts, but suddenly----Izuna declared.

“...But, I won’t let you win and run, desu.”

After he noticed that he stopped stroking her neck, Izuna looked at Tet with the eyes of a gamer.

“Together with Sora and Shiro, and with the other guys (races)----we will definitely win, desu.”

Oh my, while laughing merrily like that----

“Tehe~□ ----I got found out?”

----Tet who held up the [Star Grail] like that----Tet (the Sole God) laughed merrily.

Looking at that with unchanged half eyes, Izuna answered.

“Izuna, is a child but----isn’t a idiot, desu.”

“----Un, it’s exactly like you say. I know♪”

Youngness is foolishness but, it’s exactly because she isn’t bound by the odd illusion known as understanding----that she’s wise.

Even if the world looks complex and absurd, its nature is, no matter the time, unexpectedly----

It's something that’s exactly like how the sensibility of a child regards its figure.

Just like those two, felt about it, right----

---------.....

“He~~~~~y, Izuna~ where are you~?”

“...Izuna,-tan...where~...?”

----And, towards the voice that was coming to be heard, Tet reacted faster than Izuna and stood up.

“Oops, well then I will be going already. It was fun to be able to talk with you♪”

“More importantly, what did you come here for, desu?”

Suddenly at this point, Izuna calmed down and asked.

----Towards the obvious question of what is the Sole God doing here, with a troubled face, Tet----

“Hmm~ the truth is that I came to give [ ]-san something like a encouragement but----it’s alright□ ”

Saying that Tet made a light bustle from the [Star Grail]----

“It's because there was a greater harvest than that. “Hatsuse Izuna”-chan, I’ll be waiting for you too□ ”

Towards Izuna’s face who suddenly turned around, due to having her named called even though she didn’t remember having named herself.

Showing up a mischievous smile satisfied, at how until the very end he managed to surprise her----

Suddenly----Tet disappeared into the void, but.

“.....That bastard, he won and ran away, desu...!”

Noticing up too much late, Izuna’s tail inflated and she growled, but just her voice echoed in the backstreet...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“Ah, there she is~. Really Izuna, where have you been, I was worried you know?”

“...Izuna-tan...did, you...get, lost?”

A black-haired adolescent and contrasting him a pure-white young girl----as Sora and Shiro found out Izuna,

“Izuna~ you can’t do that you know, wandering around all alone! There are also suspicious people in the world you know.”

“...Un. Like, someone like, Nii...like, someone like, Shiro...”

Letting out a sound, she was turned around, as the “two suspicious peoples” who recognized themselves like that patted and hugged her.

Towards the seriously worried expression of the two, even though there wasn’t “any chance” of anything happening with Izuna (Warbeast)----

“...That’s...I’m sorry, desu...”

Thinking on the story she heard from Tet, she apologized with complicated feelings, and hid her face.

“----Ah! Did you find Izuna-san!? Haah...I’m glad~”

The red-haired girl who appeared a little late----Steph similarly ran closer while being covered in sweat.

“Really, Izuna-san you can’t do that, alone! There are also suspicious people like that, you know!?”

She raised her gaze so as to apologize to Steph, who was pointing out to Sora and Shiro----

Suddenly, in Izuna's gaze, in Steph's chest----a brooch of blue stone stood out.

"Hey hey, Steph-kou."

"--------Right, yes, I'm already used to it, what is it?"

"That stone in your chest, where did you take it from, desu?"

"Could you please stop saying it in a way that make it seems like I stole it?!"

After shouting out just as if she couldn't refrain from saying that, Steph showed the brooch seemingly to cherish it.

"It's something I received from my grandfather. It seems to be a family heirloom passed on by generation to generation in the Dora family."

"Let me see it, a little, desu."

"Ah, yes...its fine but, please don't bre----"

Towards Steph's answer who was slowly passing it over, Izuna nodded deeply and accepted it. And then.

----*pluck*

"Hiiyaaaaaaaaaa the heirloom! The heirloommmmm!!"

While supporting Steph who was collapsing while foaming after screaming, Sora let out with half eyes.

"Look carefully she just removed the decorative part right...that aside, Izuna you too, what's up so suddenly?"

Looking on the back side hidden by the decoration, Izuna chuckled.

Seeing that, Sora and Shiro peaked at Izuna's hands but----

"...? What's this, letters?"

“...It’s not, Immanity...Jibril...can you, read?”

Towards Shiro, who called the name of someone who wasn’t there as matter of fact----

“Yes~ yes yes□ The one who pops out when called is me, Jibril. I wonder what business the Masters have with me who sure enough can read over seven hundred languages including its archaic version♪”

“...Even though, you already know.....? Izuna-tan, what’s, wrong...?”

Izuna was giving a ferocious glare and let out a growling voice towards Jibril who suddenly appeared.

“.....Thinking about it, isn’t it all more or less her fault, desu...!”

Izuna kept glaring at Jibril while her fur stood up but, no one understood the meaning of those words.

“I-I don’t know why are you snapping out but...Jibril, this, can you read it?”

“----Now this is, some pretty old language right. It’s from before the Immanity language was unificated...erm~”

And then even for Jibril, she let out a “probably” beforehand, and read it up.

----[Coron Dora]

----[Riku Dora]

----[ShuVi Dora]

“...? Who is that. Steph, is that a relative or something of yours?”

Being asked that, Steph proudly, talked with dignity.

“Coron Dora...she was the Queen of Elkia’s Foundation. There was no one who ever saw her crying in her entire life, and she was always brimming with wisdom and smile----a talented woman who guided Immanity after the conclusion of the

[Great War]...she’s the pride of the Dora family.”

“----You-!! You are from the founding lineage!!? The Great War is from more than six thousand years ago right!!?”

“...Steph...was, an incredible princess...?”

“Could you please don’t say it in the past tense!!?”

But----like that, Steph tilted her head and looked at the brooch.

“How weird...those two are names which I don’t remember ever seeing them...?”

“...By chance it's a name which I have heard but, that wasn’t an Immanity so...what a coincidence♪”

More importantly, while saying that to Izuna who growled at Jibril’s remark----Sora asked a question.

“Hey Izuna, how did you notice something hidden in the decoration that even Steph (the owner) didn’t knew about?”

After Sora pointed that out, Shiro, Steph, and Jibril’s gazes concentrated on Izuna but----

Izuna chuckled slightly, and without answering anything, carefully returned the decoration.


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If it was told to me alone, then there certainly should have some reason for that right.

Her intuition as a Warbeast----no...Izuna’s intuition, said that.

---------.....

----Well then, and Sora once again looked around everyone’s faces.

“Is everyone with your luggage? Shiro?”

“...Ok...”

“Jibril----erm, somehow your luggage is nowhere to be seen..."

“It’s alright. I compressed the space into a pocket and put it inside ”

“What’s up with that four-dimension pocket...erm, how about Izuna?”

“Hn, no problem, desu.”

“Well for me the luggage is too big for some reason though...Steph?”

“Eeh, yeah, I’m properly with mine. A big luggage...”

“It’s a secret weapon so treat it carefully okay?----wait, hey where is Plum!”

“Ye, yess...I'm here although it's unwillingly...I’ll come out after the sun hides.”

“Alright, everyone’s gathered.”

“Huh? Sora----you won’t wait for “those two”?”

“We’ll assemble on the local----well at the worst, its fine if they join up mid-way. Since it’s like that...”

And then Sora and Shiro, looked around everyone showing up a fearless smile----

“Then----shall we go?”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

--------.....

Bellow a red moon, Sora talked while walking and bringing up everyone.

“I always thought----ever since the time I heard about this world, the [Ten Oaths] and the <Exceed>.”

Sixteen Races----and to all Races, a [Race Piece] was allocated to each one respectively.

Gathering those means a challenging right to Tet (Sole God), and that is this world. This “game”.

But doing that, a certain question is born.

“...How, do you take...the race piece, from someone...that doesn’t make, a group...like, an Old Deus?”

Shiro, who went by Sora’s side, took over Sora’s words.

----[Ten Oaths]'s Number Seven [All matter for group conflicts, will be decided by representatives with absolute authority.]

Towards something that seemed to be obvious after saying, Steph staggered while walking behind.

“That’s right, the Old Deus haven’t appointed an “Absolute Representative”. The [Piece of the Old Deus]----“can’t be taken”.”

Behind Sora who said that, Izuna followed while looking like she hasn’t understood it well yet.

“With that, the Old Deus surely are thinking this right?”

Sora raised his lips sarcastically and said.

“This world that Tet constructed----is a[game which we (Old Deus) gather the pieces of the other races], I mean.”

----That’s right, it's the difference between PLAYER (the one who challenges), and PRAYER (the one who prays).

The Old Deus thinks that they themselves are the PLAYER [Participants] and everything else is nothing but PRAYER [just pieces]----

Having such beliefs, they reflexively stepped down from the heaven, that’s what Sora is imagining.

After all, they are the guys who “eternally” warred in the past.

And then they imagine that----by thinking of same thing, there should be races that will give up and join their side.

“----But-how-ever”

With a tone that seemed to mock the Gods with that image, Sora continued.

“That’s a complete misplacement you see~ about this.”

Walking at his side in perfect condition bellow the moonlight, the Dhampir girl----correction, guy laughed.

“Yess...because, from the start this story is, you know...?”

That’s right, from the start this story----and Shiro who was walking holding hands with Sora laughed thinly.

“...The piece of race...if you don’t need to, take it...then...it’s another, story...”

And then Jibril smiled as if admirating Sora and Shiro’s----the Masters’ keen insight.

“Yes, after all, if it’s about the Absolute Representative of the Old Deus----“

And raising a flickering sound, everyone stood still.

“There isn’t really a need to let the Old Deus decide that, isn’t that so?”

Narrowing his eyes----Sora said out, as if just confirming to the person in front of his eyes.

“----“Something’s” Miko-san?

Eastern Union Capital – Kannagiri----Shrine’s Inner Garden.

In a bridge through the pound in the garden illuminated by the moonlight, the sound of a bell ringed from the one seated in the handrail.

----Eastern Union, Warbeast’s Absolute Representative.

With two golden tails swinging----[Miko], laughed bewitchingly.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

----Beyond the horizon. Returning to the throne of the Black King, Tet gazed at the land and said.

Not exactly for someone to listen, while simply playing around with a deck of cards, he threw words at the void.

“The world you know, in truth it’s a really simple thing...just like he felt.”

----Just like everyone surely must’ve thought, in their childhood.

What is making it become confusing, what is making it become complicated, isn’t the world.

It’s nothing else but the boring ones living in this world----that’s what Tet thinks.

“Those guys who are ruining, this simple game (world) that I finally created----if it’s you guys then you can do it right?”

Those guys who are making it become confusing. That’s right----the boring guys.

Those guys who thinks they are Gods (grown-ups) and keep looking from above thinking that they know something.

While letting out one sigh, Tet----as the Game Creator (Sole God).

The ones (existence) that are misunderstanding the rules and ruining the Game Balance (the world itself).

With a smile that was obviously including malice, he looked and murmured with eyes that were filled with child-like poison.

“The first one that will be dragged down, as expected it will be “you” huh...it must be karma right " "

Historically the third “Godslayer”----the one who break the Gods without killing them----

Instantly, his eyes sparkled, and Tet who was swinging his legs said with a voice filled with heat.

“If it’s you guys then----you can do it right. I’m expecting and believing ok so hurry up----“

“Drag down those boring guys, and come on until here!!”

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

“----Essence Materialization, Divine Mind Established----Divinity Configuration...”Minimum”.”

With Miko as the center the wind swirled and the clouds were blown away.

Inside the vortex of power that made even Jibril swallow her breath, Miko asked----lastly.

“Sora, Shiro, and everyone----I’ll entrust to you, my last hand so----“

That’s why----

“The dream I once saw----and then the “continuation” of the end of that dream----“

Though obstructing that line----Sora continued on.

“”It wasn’t an end” right----yeah I’ll prove that to you. Relax and leave it “to us”.”

As if being satisfied at that answer, [Miko] closed her eyes, and then----

The atmosphere, the clouds, the earth creaked. The manifestation of concept filled in the world----and weaved words.

[----Why have you summoned me, beings who have lifespan?]

The “something which is not” Miko opened its eyes, and asked.

Everyone was being pressured by that authority and coercion, that overwhelming sense of existence, but----

“The guy who is already of good age and keeps living off at people and stars while being all bossy.”

“...The other useless living being...besides us, who is, a hikikomori and NEET, virgin and has no friends.”

Seemingly to consider the rampaging wind just a bother, Sora and Shiro announced----in other words.

““<Exceed> Ranked, Number One----Old Deus, the an~cient Gods.””

“Come----let’s just start the game already. To be straight----you guys (Old Deus) are a bother.”

<End>


現実に挑んでまで
手にしたかったものと――
現実から逃げてまで
なお探し求めるもの――
『旧き神話』にはあって
『新しき神話』にはないもの
『うたわれぬもの』にはなく
『うたわれるもの』にはあるもの
他の方法、あったはずだ。
"二人で"探していれば、きっと
次こそは……今度こそは――
『十六種族』位階序列一位――神霊種を殺す殺す――
ノーゲーム・ノーライフ7』
ルフハードル上げで震える著者を待て!
待ってください……
「今一度世界を変える―
テトが偉そうに求めたもの、
"俺ら"で証明してやる」